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# NAVAL POSTGRADUATE SCHOOL Monterey, California



## THESIS

CIVIL-MILITARY RELATIONS IN THE SOVIET UNION:  
POISED FOR CONFLICT.

by

Kurt W. Ziebarth

December 1991

Thesis Advisor

Mikhail Tsypkin

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Civil-Military Relations in the Soviet Union:  
Poised for Conflict

by

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Lieutenant, United States Navy  
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Submitted in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS IN NATIONAL SECURITY AFFAIRS

from the

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## ABSTRACT

The purpose of this research is to examine civil-military relations in the Soviet Union up until the events that led to the August 1991 coup d'état. Using a historical backdrop and existing case studies, it was illustrated that the military and political leadership's had both conflict and consensus in their relationship. In an attempt to revive the stagnating Soviet economy, Gorbachev launched a radical reform of the military under the guise of glasnost, perestroika, and "new thinking". These changes had a significant impact on the civil-military relationship. Considerable access to the defense decision-making process was provided for a number of civilian institutions reducing the military's autonomy in military affairs. Glasnost provided the impetus for scrutiny and criticism of previous military policies demoralizing military leadership. Splits in the officer corps resulted from the enhanced political participation supported by Gorbachev. Lower and middle ranking officer in favor of radical reforms became disillusioned with the conservatism of the High Command. The degree of conflict rose between the military and Gorbachev as concessions on a host of arms control agreements, the collapse of Communist power in Eastern Europe, and the deteriorating situation between the central government and the republics left the military in a state of flux. Gorbachev's persistence toward further reform lead to the demise of the Communist Party and the ideology to which the military had been bound to serve. With no economic return in sight and an impending Union Treaty that would divulge a great deal of military decision-making to the republics, the disgruntled High Command pledged its support to the coup.

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## I. INTRODUCTION

President Mikhail Gorbachev unleashed a radical restructuring of civil-military relations. "New Thinking" and democratization fundamentally changed the military's role in Soviet politics. These changes have enhanced civilian participation into what was once considered the military's turf and continues to erode the military's position in society. Civil-military relations reached unmistakable tension and conflict during the latter part of Gorbachev's six years in power. Ultimately this conflict came to a head in August 1991 as a coup d'etat attempted by conservative forces and supported by members of the High Command ended in failure. An investigation into the relationship between Gorbachev, the Party, and the military prior to the putsch is imperative. The implications for future U. S. and "Soviet" relations and global stability will be strongly influenced by the new civil-military balance achieved by the republics.

The Soviets have not established a clear cut organization to assert civilian control over the military. Communist Party control was based to a large degree on ideology. It was thought that military leaders had accepted party hegemony and had no higher political aspirations. A theme often asserted was that "the military was an inalienable part of the people and that its development has never been, and will never be, something set apart or isolated from other spheres of

party and state activity."<sup>1</sup> Timothy Colton explained three modes which established party control over the military. The first implied that party leadership was hierarchically superior to the military and it alone "directed and coordinated the activity of all state and public organs for the strengthening of the country's defense capability."<sup>2</sup> The second mode of control was from within the military. Party and Komsomol membership of nearly all military personnel embodied the spirit of the party and conveyed its priorities and decisions. A third control mechanism was achieved by a vast, convoluted, structure of political organs, namely the Main Political Administration (MPA). This organization occupied *the* position on the military-political boundary and exerted party influence on every aspect of the life and activity of the forces.<sup>3</sup> The relationship between the Party and military was dynamic. It was shaped by important systemic, structural, and ideological limits, such as the hegemonic power of a single party, the absence of a constitutional means of transferring power, security, ...and the Marxist-Leninist tradition that views standing armies as anti-revolutionary forces and threats to party hegemony.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Colton, T.J., *Commissars, Commanders, and Civilian Authority*, Harvard University Press, 1979, p. 2.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, p. 3.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Kolkowicz, R., "The Future of Civil-Military Relations in Socialist Countries: The Soviet Union", cited in Perlmutter, A., *Modern Authoritarianism*, Yale University Press, 1981, p. 53.

The Defense Council was one of the most important means of Party control over the military. Throughout the history of the Soviet Union the Council had several predecessors, but its function remained the same. It served as the central locus of interaction between the political and military leadership for the resolution of defense-related issues. It was a political body and often adjusted to the changing political realities. The Council was a direct means to convey the political leadership's demands and often reflected a leader's shifting sensitivities.

A number of paradigms have been developed to characterize civil-military relations in the Soviet Union. While several models exist, three distinct theories dominate the literature. The first, described by Roman Kolkowicz, maintains that the relationship between the military and the Communist Party has been subjected to continuous conflict. The military has struggled to obtain its professional autonomy while the Party infiltrates and undermines its efficiency. The history of party-military relations presents a study in conflicts created by a certain incompatibility between the sole holder of power in the state and one of the main instruments of that power.<sup>5</sup> Kolkowicz also argues that the degree of military professionalism, or autonomy, is directly proportional to the increasing levels of technology in warfare. As the Communist Party allowed greater autonomy, the military established itself as an interest group that sought to challenge civilian controls for a greater role in society.

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<sup>5</sup> Kolkowicz, R., *The Soviet Military and the Communist Party*, Westview Press, 1985, p. 11.



William Odom describes a completely opposite scenario. He maintains that the military was born of the party and that the two are not in conflict with each other but maintain a symbiotic relationship. Differences of opinion do crop up from time to time but "against a background of broad pragmatic consensus."<sup>6</sup> For Odom, cooperation is the hallmark of the relationship. He states that military professionalism does not generate politically significant attitudes. Soviet Marshals and Generals should be thought of bureaucratic executants of the will of the party bosses with whom they basically agree rather than as defenders of a corporate cause or would-be praetorians.<sup>7</sup> The sum total of the interaction, despite small differences, is for the betterment of the Soviet Union.

Timothy Colton challenges the previous two models. Instead, he maintains the relationship is coalitional; that the party maintains its dominance, but that the military is rarely politically quiescent. This thesis proposes something in between that of Kolkowicz and Odom. He states that while conflict and congruence has been a factor at various stages in the relationship, an intricate balance between the two and the efficiency of the party apparatus denies the military complete control. It stresses that the interaction between military and civilian elites, in which neither side attains absolute domination, but the party's sovereign power is accepted.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Colton, T. J. and Gustafson, T. eds., *Soldiers and the Soviet State: Civil-Military Relations from Brezhnev to Gorbachev*, Princeton University Press, 1990, p. 13.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid, p. 14.

Soviet defense policies are the outcomes of extended bargaining and political maneuvering among a variety of interested institutions.<sup>9</sup> Colton's "participatory model" has several benefits over those of Odom and Kolkowicz. The latter presumes that the Party and the military form dichotomous categories. This constrains the extent to which military officers and civilians actually take part in politics. Colton's model also leaves room for internal differentiation on both sides of the civil-military boundary and for the existence of cross-institutional connections and alliances.<sup>10</sup> It provides analytical flexibility and allows more than one level of complexity.

Colton appears to have projected the most accurate description of the relationship. Using Colton's model and the benefit of hindsight, civil-military relationships will be reviewed. In its outset, a historical overview of the relationship starting at the end of the nineteenth century will be evaluated. It is during this period that a formative military ethos was generated. Much of the civil-military debate centered on the role of the military. Civilian institutions pressed their own ideas as to the function of the military bringing them into conflict with the military.

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<sup>9</sup> Colton, T., *Commissars, Commanders, and Civilian Authority*, pp. 4-5.

<sup>10</sup> Colton, T. J., "The Party-Military Connection: a Participatory Model", in Herspring, D.R. and Volgyes, I., *Civil-Military Relations in Communist Systems*, Westview, 1978, p. 63.

As revolution and civil war swept through the country former Czarist officers were incorporated into the Red Army to bolster its organization and prevent the premature collapse of the state. The Communists had little trust of the military and the power it possessed. Institutions were established that would control and monitor commanders ensuring their allegiance and education met with Party approval.

Stalin dominated the civil-military relationship. The High Command had little choice but to heed the wisdom and decisions of Stalin. However, resistance at lower levels of command and control were evident during the war. A great deal of consensus was formed between the political organs and Red commanders as the demands of war effort took priority. The majority of the conflict was not among the latter but between the fronts and the central government and their management of the war effort. There were periods during Stalin's tenure that accommodated the interests of the military. Accolades such as rank, insignia, and permanent prestige were bestowed upon the military. However, the freedom to debate military art and strategy were highly censored restricting the military's autonomy until his death.

The military's ethos was revitalized under Khrushchev as officers began to voice their opinions with little fear of retribution. He relied to a large extent on the military to secure the top leadership position. However, once his position was firmly established, Khrushchev moved to put his own personal impression on the military organization. His emphasis on strategic rockets lead to extensive

reductions in the ground, air and naval forces. Ironically, Khrushchev ventured into a foreign policy which depended on enhanced military power. His "harebrained schemes" brought resentment from the military and the Party, eventually leading to his ouster.

The "golden age" of the military was under the direction of Brezhnev. The vast military build up, and Brezhnev's determination to confront United States military power, provided the military greater access to the political process. Detente brought equal status to the Soviet Union in the international arena. However, the rate of economic growth fell below that of military spending necessitating a change in Brezhnev's attitude. Constraints on military spending were imposed and party dominance over the military increased.

The trend set by Brezhnev continued through the brief leadership periods of Andropov and Chernenko. However, the calls for belt-tightening did not suppress the military's advocacy for further investment and criticism of the U.S. military build-up. Marshal Ogarkov led the outspoken resistance to civilian supremacy. His removal in 1984 was a tremendous blow to the military's political status. The move was a signal of the divergence in attitudes towards defense decision making.

Mikhail Gorbachev grossly changed the institutional structure of politics and power in the Soviet Union. The economic stagnation created by the high levels of defense spending, corruption, and mismanagement demanded reform. Many officers welcomed the restructuring as a means to keep pace with increasingly



high levels of technology being incorporated into modern weapons. However, the technological reward never materialized as the timid economic reforms supported by Gorbachev did not succeed during the first five years he was in power.

The military had its political position attacked from all sides of Soviet polity creating conflict between civilian and military leaders. Gorbachev, a master political tactician, removed obstacles to the reform process by forming a coalition of supporters around him and eliminating those who opposed him. Within the military, an unprecedented number of personnel changes were implemented. During the first four years of Gorbachev's tenure forty-six new appointments have occurred at the top level regional command.<sup>11</sup>

Lead by Foreign Minister Edward Shevardnadze, and Party Secretary Alexandr Yakovlev, civilian attacks on the military ensued. The signing of the INF treaty, unilateral force reductions, and withdrawal from Eastern Europe attest to the success of civilian political dominance. Gorbachev has widened the participation in the defense decision making process. The establishment of greater presidential powers relegated the politburo to party affairs leaving the party with little input to national policy. The Defense Council, Main Military Council and the Joint Committee on International Affairs and on Defense and State Security of the Supreme Soviet have overtaken military dominance in defense decision making process. The once hallowed ground of the General Staff

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<sup>11</sup> Zamascikov, S., *Changes in the Soviet Military Leadership Since 1987*, RAND Corporation N-3188-USDP, December 1990, p. 1.

has become fair game for heated debate as to the future structure and organization of the armed forces.

Glasnost has severely impacted the military. Widened public scrutiny on a host of military issues has allowed the military to become a political scapegoat for Gorbachev's lack of economic success. Ironically, even though Gorbachev has down played the role of the military in international affairs, widespread republican nationalism and violence required a greater dependance on the military to maintain internal control. Much to the dislike of military personnel, the army was called upon to mediate violent clashes between the republics. The Tbilisi incident severely effected the public image of the military. It involved a brutal repression of a public demonstration in Tbilisi which resulted in the deaths of 19 people. The operation was directed by the military. Desertions and draft dodging are being advocated by republican governments. Ethnic violence threatens to split the military from within.

The institutional changes implemented by Gorbachev have fundamentally altered Soviet military politics. The abandonment of the Communist Party and enhanced civilian access to military affairs placed the leadership of the high Command in a dark corner. Amos Perlmutter stated that the recipe for military intervention into politics:

"...officers are likely to take political action when the integrity of their professionalism is weakened. This integrity weakens as a result of the

decline of the military status of officers, military defeat, and the rise of radical movements."<sup>12</sup>

With this criteria met, several leaders of the Soviet High Command collaborated with Communist hard liners in an attempt to oust Gorbachev from power and reestablish the old order. The failed coup resulted in a modern day revolution speeding up the reform process and ushering in a new phase of civil-military relations.

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<sup>12</sup> Perlmutter, A., *The Military and Politics in Modern Times*, Yale University Press, 1977, pp. 34-35.

## II. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF CIVIL-MILITARY RELATIONS

### A. THE MILITARY AND THE TSARS

The pre-revolutionary armies of the Tsars was dominated by the nobility. Military professionalism was curtailed as the Tsars refused to differentiate between the military and civilian administration. Russia was a highly militaristic state as its government relied on the military to solve both foreign and domestic conflicts. Many officers were thought of as general purpose agents and participated a great deal in both civil and military affairs. This could be explained by the Tsars zeal for the military way of life and partly because the military academies out-produced their civilian counterparts in education. The cumulative effect produced a broad consensus of opinion with respect to civil-military relations. Any conflict between the military and the government was nominally due to a specific grievances by individuals against the regime and generally not representative of the entire military.<sup>13</sup>

The military reforms enacted by War Minister D. A. Miliutin in 1874 significantly changed the attitudes of military leaders. Professionalism began to develop among the military as it sought to promote its sphere of influence and expertise in military affairs. As William Fuller states: "there was a constant

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<sup>13</sup> Keep, J. L., *Soldiers of the Tsar: Army and Society in Russia, 1462-1874*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1985, Chaps. 10-11.



diffusion of professional ideas and attitudes among a growing segment of the military elite."<sup>14</sup> Towards the end of the 1890's, demonstrations and riots by peasants and intelligentsia against the Tsars authority produced tension in civil-military relations. During the 1905-1907 revolution the regime dispatched troops to not only suppress disorder but to deter them. Also at issue was the Minister of War's indifference to the eroding military budget and increased internal role. The greatest source of debate however, concerned the role and function of the military. Compartmentalization of state agencies pitted civilian ministries (i.e. Department of Justice), the autocracy, and the military against each other. Each interest group had its own perspective as to the best uses for the army. These missions ranged from guard duty at the growing numbers of prisons, to policing the rebelling districts along the periphery of the empire. The military leadership had only one mission in mind and that was the preparation and training for war. Fuller states that Imperial Russian military professionalism and civil-military conflict fueled each other. The more professionalism exhibited by the military, the more vigorously it pushed for the modernization of the military arsenal and the creation of a truly national, patriotic military. The more civilian ministries frustrated these goals, the more firmly officers adhered to their program. Russian military politics was interest group politics.<sup>15</sup> The military elite appreciated

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<sup>14</sup> Fuller, W., *Civil-Military Conflict in Imperial Russia, 1881-1914*, Princeton University Press, 1985, p. 262.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid, p. 263.

politics less for what it meant for the country and more for the possible benefits it accrued to Russia's military potential.

"Russian military professionalism was essentially inward-looking, insular, and concerned with the general problem of governance only insofar as it directly impinged upon the army. For professional officers the army became an end to itself, the preservation of the army a goal more important than the survival of the Romanov dynasty or the Empire."<sup>16</sup>

There were no attempts at military intervention during the later half of the nineteenth century. However, in what could be construed as a coup d'état, was the military's involvement in the abdication of Nicholas II in March 1917. It is thought he abdicated his throne at the recommendation of a considerable number of front line commanders. Their encouragement was a result of the mismanagement of the war effort.

Civil-military relations had a adverse impact on the combat readiness of the armed forces towards the end of Imperial Russia. The War Minister's intransigence over issues such as living conditions, morale and recognition of military professionalism produced a military that had atrophied. His concentration on trivial details and bickering with the civilian leadership did not serve the military's interests but detracted from them. The military's diversion to other sources of conflict within a crumbling regime led to serious fractures in their leadership resulting in the readiness ally with the forces of revolution.

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid, p. 261.

## B. REVOLUTION, CIVIL WAR, AND PEACE

This period represents the most important stage in civil-military relations. It was during the revolution and subsequent civil war that the structure, organization, and domestic role of the Soviet military was determined. Lenin and his followers made few plans for the structure and use of the military. According to Marxist theory, there was no need for a standing army in an advanced socialist state. The gains of the revolution would be protected by arming the proletariat. As early as 1905, Lenin indicated his revulsion to large standing armies:

"In every State everywhere, a standing army serves as a tool against the internal enemy rather than against an external one. Everywhere it turns into a tool of reaction...We must destroy this evil and eliminate the standing army completely. People in arms must absorb the army into itself; the soldier must bring their military competence along with them to the people."<sup>17</sup>

The Bolsheviks had considerable uncertainty as to the role the military would play in their quest for power. This changed following the crisis of 1905, as soldiers and sailors became valuable allies for the overthrow of the government. They formed powerful groups aimed at reducing the power of the officer corps and promoting better social conditions. Thousands of men mutinied or deserted in their quest for full civil and political rights. In order to exploit these movements, early civil-military relations consisted of an intense campaign by the Bolshevik's to undermine, and disband the armies associated with the

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<sup>17</sup> Avidar, Y., *The Party and the Army in the Soviet Union*, Magnus Press, 1983, p. 9.

provisional government. By late 1916, party departments and combat detachments had been established in the army and navy to win the support of soldiers and sailors.<sup>18</sup>

The reasons for Lenin's reliance on the military were self-evident and measures to appease them of primary importance. His first decrees issued on 8 November 1917, the *Decree on Peace* and the *Decree on Land*, were concessions to the soldiers demands that had aligned them with Bolshevik power. The former was an appeal to workers and peasants of all of the warring factions to cease the bloody war and the later gave peasants land ownership. On the same day capital punishment was also abolished by the Second Congress of Soviets.<sup>19</sup> The objectives of Lenin were clear: end the war as soon as possible and send the soldiers home to promote a new social order.

The cumulative effects of the massive demobilization and dissent within the military allowed the German advance to continue unabated. Lenin quickly realized that while other nations still possessed standing armies, he would need one as well. Despite the objections of many soldiers, the People's Council of Commissars issued a decree establishing the Worker's Peasant Red Army on January 15, 1918. It was intended to be a voluntary force of organized elements

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<sup>18</sup> Von Hagen, M., *Soldiers in the Proletarian Dictatorship: The Red Army and the Soviet Socialist State, 1917-1930*, Cornell University Press, 1990, p. 16.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid, p. 17.



of the toiling masses possessed of revolutionary consciousness.<sup>20</sup> The decree did not provide sufficient manpower, however, as only approximately 200,000 men were recruited. The treaty of Brest-Litovsk in March 1918, provided the necessary pause in the war with Germany for an intense debate on the reorganization of the military.

The debate centered on the Commissar for War Leon Trotsky and Joseph Stalin. At issue was the organization and role of the military. Trotsky maintained it should evolve in two phases. The first phase would form a professional army with mandatory service. Other characteristics included: rigid discipline, ranks and training; orthodox strategy, free from ideology, and be highly centralized. The justification for the first phase was the urgent need to defend the country from outside aggression. A second phase would begin with the conclusion of hostilities and form a truly "revolutionary army". It would become a decentralized, voluntary military, formed on a territorial basis. It would equalize all rank, and remove strict training, discipline and utilized revolutionary military strategy. Trotsky maintained the support of Lenin but his proposals generated widespread dissatisfaction among the military and in particular with supporters of Stalin. Stalin, even though he approved of a highly centralize army, felt threatened by Trotsky's increased power base and advocated a revolutionary

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid p. 13.



army. The resultant structure of the Red Army was a compromise between the two phases. The Eighth Party Congress delineated the following structure:

The Red Army would have a definite class character. It was formed as a highly centralized, regular standing army supported by conscription. It included the use of "Military Specialists"<sup>21</sup> controlled by an enhanced system of political commissars supported by the secret police<sup>22</sup>

### **1. The Dilemmas of Demobilization**

Civil-military debate continued into the 1920's. As the regime ran into economic difficulties, the anti-military factions greatly influenced the recommendations of Trotsky. Trotsky shared the opinion of many civilian leaders that the army was already the beneficiary of considerable attention and resources during the Civil War and in light of the economic troubles, the military would have to do with less. The defeat of the White Army forces in November 1920 opened a new era for the military. The Red Army numbered approximately five million men by 1920 and was becoming an increasing burden on the economy. A Central Committee commission was organized for the discussion of demobilization and subsequently recommended the forces be cut in half. The Defense and Labor Council (STO) hoped to have half the soldiers back for the spring sowing in 1921.<sup>23</sup> The Eighth Congress of Soviets which met in December

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<sup>21</sup> These were senior officers from the Imperial Army. They were incorporated into the Red Army for their expertise in military tactics and strategy.

<sup>22</sup> Kolkowicz, R., *The Soviet Military and The Communist Party*, pp. 40-41.

<sup>23</sup> Von Hagen, M., p. 126.

1920 reemphasized the need for freeing the public from the crippling expense of maintaining the large Civil War Army. The Congress committed the republic to the creation of a militia and large force reductions. Its disregard of what to do with the existing Red Army was reflected in the management of the reduction which served to angered military leaders. Transportation failures spread chaos, disease and created manpower shortages. The loss of the military's privileged position in society no longer made it immune from the economic crisis that was effecting society. Poor living conditions promoted mass defections and desertion rates. Commissars and Commanders coalesced together to fend off attacks from society. "Even considering our devastation, our poverty, the shortages of everything", charged a bitter official in PUR (Political administration of the Revolutionary Military Council of the Republic) "still it must be said that in this case the Red Army soldier was not shown the attention he deserved."<sup>24</sup>

The focus of the civilian attack was not directly on the Army, but on the Political Administration, which symbolized a distinctive party "style" that a large sector of the civilian organization had come to loath.<sup>25</sup> A set of common attitudes and approaches within the military were forged on the basis of similar experiences in the recent war. For a large group of commanders, commissars, and political workers, the army was their fundamental identification with the new

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid, p. 131.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid, p. 132.

regime and with the revolution. They were accustomed to an army with political controls from the Communist Party and to practices that gave more power to the soldiers to intervene in army politics than had been characteristic of the tsarist army....<sup>26</sup>

Much to the disgust of military leaders as well as high party members, Trotsky's major effort to alter the deplorable conditions in the military were based on what he called his "emphasis on lifestyle". Trotsky alienated the military with his numerous concessions on military reform. He felt that the problems the military was facing were only a ramification of the backwardness of the Russian society as a whole. "Change could only be implemented through teaching citizens to work accurately, punctually, and economically and soldiers to read and write, use manuals and maps, and to cultivate habits of tidiness, punctuality and thrift."<sup>27</sup> He warned that transformation could not be achieved by some miraculous means such as a specially invented proletarian military doctrine supported by Red commanders and commissars. Many of Trotsky's enemies took this as a statement that reflected a violation of party ethics and ideological heresy. Political leaders within the military felt offended by Trotsky's statements and accused him of abandoning the revolution. Consequently, in late March 1921, as a series of international crises threatened the new regime, opponents of Trotsky

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid, p. 137.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid, p. 186.

in the Central Committee formed a commission to review the nation's defense preparedness.<sup>28</sup> They found that the Red Army command had no mobilization plan for war and failed even to make an inventory of the resources available in the preparation of such a plan. Lenin's death on January 24, 1924 signalled a sharp turn for the fate of the army. With Lenin's hesitating but constant support now gone, Trotsky no longer made an effort to halt the army's takeover by his opponents. Another investigation was conducted by one of Trotsky's most ardent foes, the former head of PUR Sergei Gusev one week after Lenin's death. When the results were compiled, Trotsky's ouster seemed inevitable. By the time the Central Committee formally relieved Trotsky of his duties, in January 1925, Mikhail Frunze already had been administering the army for nearly a year. A new era was beginning in the Red Army.

## C. STALIN AND THE MILITARY

### 1. Military Reform

Frunze worked in close communication with the Central Committee as military reforms were initiated in 1923. The most significant reform under taken was the transition to a mixed system of a regular cadre army and a territorial militia. Much of the civil-military debate had centered on this issue since the army's inception. Despite objection and complaints by the Military Opposition that the system would be ineffective the transition was begun.

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid, pp. 184-185.

In exchange for its agreeing to the new structure, military leaders acquired several concessions. The first dealt with command of the territorial units. Initially the units were subordinate to the Vsevobuch (Universal Military Training Administration) under the direction of Nikolai Podvoiskii. Podvoiskii was not liked by the military for his views against the establishment of a standing army. The Vsevobuch was a source of aggravation for the military due to the inherent problems of an organization not under direct military control involved in conducting military training. A major victory was achieved for the proponents of a regular army as command of the territorial units was transferred to the Army Commissariat and moved to a position subordinate to the army's administrative and supply system.<sup>29</sup> The Vsevobuch could no longer compete with the military and was completely dismantled. Other concessions included a mandate that training of the militia be achieved by regular soldiers and officers, and the imperative that militia units be located away from foreign borders. Furthermore, the party made a solemn promise to expand its role in the pre-induction training once held by the now extinct Vsevobuch.<sup>30</sup>

Another reform seen as crucial to the rehabilitation of the officer corps was the elimination of the dual command system. This system required commissars to sign any orders drafted by Red commanders before soldiers and sailors were

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<sup>29</sup> Von Hagen, M., p. 207.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.



obliged to obey them. In addition, it also provided the impetus for commissars to engage in operational matters of command which often lead to confusion and conflicting orders. An intense debate over the future of the political structures of the military ensued. Many political officers insisted that it was too soon for the transition to a one-man command system as not enough reliable officers had the necessary political education. In 1925, a new regulation demoted the commissars status. The regulation authorized commissars to conduct day to day party and political work, but conspicuously missing was any reference to monitoring officers conduct.<sup>31</sup> Other reforms included an increase in pay, improved living standards for officers, and the "militarization" of the political staff. Militarization was a program whereby military education was afforded to the political officers that were being phased out of the command hierarchy and aspired to command.

## 2. Stalin's Balancing Act

Stalin had a profound effect on civil-military relations. He used a "balancing act" with respect to the military's demands.<sup>32</sup> This tactic allowed some military professionalism (greater command authority, social and economic privileges) to occur, but was offset by imposing stricter political controls. Soon after removing opponents to his unquestioned authority, Stalin initiated his "revolution from above". The plan sought to rapidly industrialize and collectivize

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<sup>31</sup> Ibid, p. 218.

<sup>32</sup> Kolkowicz, R., *The Soviet Military and the Communist Party*, p.49.

agriculture much to the military's benefit. The inauguration of the first five year plan in 1928 was a major event for the military as the drive to implement a massive technical-industrial base was set in motion. Professionalism was enhanced by the construction of several military academies. Between 1934 and 1935 the last of the territorial militia were eliminated, and the standing army raised from 562,000 thousand to 1.3 million men.<sup>33</sup> Rank and insignia were reintroduced. The role of the army was refined, as military combat training was initiated at all levels. In 1935, the General Staff was instituted providing a forum for the discussion of military science and doctrine.

While Stalin made concessions to the military, he still had little trust of them. The Military Council was introduced in May 1937. As a form of collective leadership these were set up in various military districts and composed of the district commander, the head of the Political Administration, and the secret police. This measure demoralized military commanders who no longer were free to make decisions, or issue even a single order, without the express permission of the council.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Ibid, p.54.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid, p. 58.

### 3. The Purges

One of the most subjective controls<sup>35</sup> were the purges. The purges of 1937-38 decapitated the military. The grounds for being purged were completely arbitrary. All ranks within the military subjected to its terror as some estimates indicate sixty percent of the officer corps was liquidated. It caused a severe brain-drain leaving the military debilitated with little combat effectiveness. Political officers were not immune from the purges. As Colton describes:

"The purge was a bludgeoning, not a surgical operation... Far from being a measured action by the party's organs in the army in the name of the party and its values, the purge was a crude assault *upon* the party apparatus as well as upon the army command itself."<sup>36</sup>

As the invasion of Poland and war with Finland began, the performance of the military revealed the extent to which the purges had decimated the army. In a four month campaign against Finland, whose army totalled 200,000 men, the Soviets employed 1.5 million men and suffered 200,000 casualties, 68,000 of which were dead.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Samuel Huntington coined the phrase "subjective controls" which meant maximizing the power of civilian groups vis-a-vis the military leadership by patronage, surveillance, class-or kinship based recruitment, or some other intrusive device. Huntington, S. P., *The Soldier and the State: The Theory and Politics of Civil-Military Relations*, Harvard University Press, 1957, Chaps. 1-4.

<sup>36</sup> Colton, T. J., *Commissars, Commanders, and Civilian Authority*, pp. 136-137.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid, p. 65.

#### 4. World War II Decision Making

The German attack in 1941 came as a surprise to Stalin despite many warnings issued by the military. Several reasons why he did not heed the warning signs of the impending conflict have been proposed. Stalin was extremely wary of Hitler and did not want to upset the delicate Nazi-Soviet pact he worked so hard to obtain. Any troop movements or harassment of German aircraft overflights were seen as destabilizing. Stalin also had little trust of his military informants and may have believed that the German maneuvers were an attempt to disguise their true intentions. Despite Stalin's gross miscalculation, the military had to deal with the consequences of his decisions and did so at several different levels of command.

The central military leadership had no choice but to support the decisions of Stalin. There were many criticisms by front line commanders that the High Command was not heeding their advice concerning the German maneuvers. The intelligence the High Command was in many cases disregarded. The General Staff viewed Stalin's decisions as competent and sound. They even went so far as to order troops to keep their distance from the front and prevented air and ground interference of German overflights as late as the morning of June 22.<sup>38</sup> The military party organs were also supportive of the decision to exercise restraint. They insisted that despite the overt moves by the Germans at the fronts

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<sup>38</sup> Ibid, p. 153.

there would be no war and that talk about the prospect was provoking in itself. There were those in the High Command that were disturbed by the discrepancy between public propaganda and their own perceptions and responsibilities and attempted to change or circumvent official policy. The Chiefs of the Army and Navy Main Political Administration (MPA) objected to what they perceived as pacifist tones and the complacent character of official attitudes.<sup>39</sup>

At the field command level, the incentives for taking action against central policy were greater as they viewed the impending attack as inevitable. Minor troop movements as well as some equipment staging was achieved before the attack. Many political officers were equally supportive of a more forward looking approach than that advocated by the center. Political officers attempted to promote greater combat readiness by lecturing on the danger signals reflected by the German army's posture and the threat of Nazi aggression. Some passed information to superiors about German movements while still others directly collaborated with commanders in conducting of permitting precautionary measures such as readying equipment or repositioning front line officers and troops.<sup>40</sup>

The poor performance of the military was staggering. In less than three weeks the army had retreated 600 kilometers.<sup>41</sup> Stalin blamed the military for

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<sup>39</sup> Ibid, p. 155.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid, p. 156.

<sup>41</sup> Kolkowicz, R., *The Soviet Military and the Communist Party*, p. 65.



the bungled operation. Assuming direct responsibility for strategic leadership he immediately promoted himself as the Supreme Commander-in-chief, People's Commissar of Defense, and chairman of both the State Defense Committee and of the Supreme Military Headquarters of Stavka.<sup>42</sup> He also remained General Secretary of the Party but no party congresses were held during the war years. Initially all decisions concerning military operations were made unilaterally by Stalin and communicated through the Stavka. He often belittled the General Staff's role by communicating directly with front commanders. As the war effort continued, officers of the General Staff came to acquire greater authority with Stalin. They were often responsible for collecting battlefield information providing maps from which Stalin planned his operations, and whose reports were normally the basis on which the orders of the day were formulated.<sup>43</sup> Stalin began to seek the expertise of his deputies in the decision making process. The postwar fates of some of the members of the Stavka should not obscure Stalin's evident admiration and affection for many of them during the war particularly the Chiefs of General Staff - Zhukov, Boris Shaposhnikov, and Aleksandr Vasilevski.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> Colton, T. J., *Commissars, Commanders, and Civilian Authority*, p. 158.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid, p. 159.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid, p. 160.

Much of the consensus of opinion between the members of the Stavka and Stalin did not exist between the lower levels of command and the Stavka. As Colton explains,

"once the fray was joined, opinions about decisions coalesced across institutional borders. The main line of cleavage in the fierce bureaucratic politics of the war were dictated by hierarchy and territory not by the boundary between army and party, or between military command and the MPA."<sup>45</sup>

The most salient cleavage was between the center and the periphery demonstrated by the workings of the military leadership and the behavior of the Stavka Commander Zhukov and the Stavka Commissar Mekhlis. Zhukov was Stalin's most trusted advisor. He had gained the support of both the High Command and the political administration for his command of the war effort. However, his critics outnumbered his supporters. It has been said that he was given to "sharp expressions and high notes" and "did not choose courteous words" in his demands and orders.<sup>46</sup> He often disregarded the opinions and recommendations of his subordinates as there were numerous accounts of how Zhukov insulted and intimidated front line officers.<sup>47</sup> It has been asserted by some Western analysts that he singled out political officers as a means to release the political controls over the military's autonomy. However, his tough treatment extended to both commanders as well as commissars. Colton asserts "I know of

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<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid, p. 162.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

no occasion when Zhukov singled out a commissar for abuse...if at times he saw party workers as adversaries, it was along with commanders, never apart from them.<sup>48</sup>

Lev Mekhlis's role in the Stavka was preceded by his performance as overseer of the Great Purge of 1937-38. He treated everyone he came into contact with contempt. His high-handedness dominated the Military Council as he "interfered with literally every operational matter".<sup>49</sup> Consensus on his relationship with commanders is split. In a characteristic description of the relationship between most political officers and commanders, he was often praised for his distinguished role in logistics. His position in the Stavka, before being dismissed for the losses at the Crimean Front, brought exceptional clout and facilitated the acquisition of scarce war supplies. Mekhlis was disliked by both commanders and political officers for his aloofness towards military affairs. Given his low opinion of political officers other than himself, it is no wonder that on the Crimean Front the commissars of a tank brigade and tank repair unit were scornful of Mekhlis's ineptitude as any other officers were; nor is it surprising that Khrushchev thought he was a nitwit.<sup>50</sup> Despite his role in the Great Purge, the interpretation that Mekhlis was out to subjugate the military to party control is unfounded.

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<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid, p.164.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid, p. 165.

## 5. Stalin's Post-War Policy

Stalin's post-war relationship with the military was quickly revealed with the end of hostilities. The climate of the Soviet Union had been demoralized by the war. Stalin immediately assumed credit for the victorious war effort and reasserted increased controls over the military. He attributed the victory not to just the heroism of the Red Army but to his policies of industrialization and collectivization. Zhukov was removed from his position as Commander of the Soviet occupation zone and move to the Odessa military district. An organizational shake up created a more centralized defense structure combining the National Commissariat of Defense and the National Commissariat of the Navy into a single Ministry of Defense. A political General N. A. Bulganin was named as Defense Minister in 1947 and given the rank of Marshal of the Soviet Union.

Improvement to the military's political stature came about in 1948 with the death of Zhdanov. Zhdanov ranked third in the leadership behind Stalin and was a stout party ideologue. His attempts to thwart party controls through the MPA were overcome the political administrations of the army and navy were separated thereby weakening their influence. Marshal Vasilevski replaced Bulganin as Defense Minister and Zhukov began to reassert himself. In 1952, the Nineteenth Party Congress allowed notable access of military professionals to the Central Committee as full members. Marshal Zhukov was also named as a candidate



member to the committee.<sup>51</sup> It was at this time that the rise of the "Stalingrad group" became evident.<sup>52</sup> It was this group, bounded together by their war experience, that would support Khrushchev's struggle for the party leadership and usher in a new era of party-military relations.

#### **D. KHRUSHCHEV AND THE MILITARY**

Stalin died in March 1953 with no formal succession mechanism in place. An intense power struggle ensued allowing the military to assert its position. The struggle was between essentially two groups. One surrounded Khrushchev and used the Central Committee and Secretariat as its power base. The other group coalesced around Malenkov using the resources of the Party presidium and the governmental bureaucracy. The influence of the military was sought by both sides as crucial towards tipping the balance of power in their favor. Khrushchev was able to generate powerful leverage in the military by his access to sections of the Secretariat and the Defense Ministry that were in charge of promotions, appointments and other personnel matters. This initiated several promotions of Khrushchev's comrades from the Stalingrad group, and as a consequence, strengthened Khrushchev's position. Malenkov was ousted in 1955. This was

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<sup>51</sup> Kolkowicz, R., *The Soviet Military and the Communist Party*, p. 243.

<sup>52</sup> The Stalingrad group consisted of several officers that had participated in the battle of Stalingrad. The front commanders became acquainted with Khrushchev during this decisive battle, and used his prestigious position as head of the Military Council to support them during their dealings with Zhukov and the Stavka.



followed by several promotions of officers to the rank of Marshal and Zhukov's appointment as Defense Minister.

## **1. De-Stalinization**

De-Stalinization had a very positive effect on civil-military relations. Khrushchev denounced Stalin's legacy in his "secret speech" to the 20th Party Congress in 1956. At the same time he announced the infallibility of the party and officially acknowledged the acts of injustice committed against the officer corps during the purges of 1937-38. This provided impetus for the rehabilitation of the officer corps and a growing sense of security in voicing their opinion on national security matters. Debates over the crucial role the army had played in the war effort openly contradicted the previous party platform of Stalin. Blame was cast directly upon Stalin for the poor performance in Poland and Finland. The victories of the "Great Patriotic War" were used to bolster the military's morale and prestige among society.

The repudiation of Stalin provided new latitudes for public debate concerning questions of military doctrine. The role of nuclear weapon in Soviet military strategy produced a great deal conflict between Khrushchev and the military leadership. The debate centered on Khrushchev's sole reliance on nuclear rockets for the defense of the Soviet Union. In lieu of these new weapons, he proposed that other means of warfare were rendered obsolete. As a result the ground, naval, and air forces were subjected to large cuts in there forces. The military felt offended by Khrushchev's interference in what they thought was

their political domain. They considered the sole reliance on an untested weapon to be irresponsible. The concept of nuclear deterrence was also questioned as being a dangerous source of security. Security they maintained could only be ensured by an adequate conventional force to back it up with.

Despite Khrushchev's "meddling" directly in the affairs of strategic planning, the military gained significant freedom in the arena of Soviet politics. The increasingly high levels of technology being incorporated into new weapons systems, and the enhanced role the military began to play in Soviet foreign policy provided the impetus for future civil-military cooperation.

## **2. Zhukov's Decline**

The rise and fall of Marshal Zhukov has been a central issue in the study of civil-military relations. His immediate increase in stature when Stalin died was not by accident. He still had significant political clout that was useful for Khrushchev's power politics. He was named First Deputy Defense Minister in 1953 and made a full member of the Central Committee. He succeeded Bulganin as Defense Minister becoming the third professional officer to hold the post. He was made a candidate member of the Presidium in 1956 and a full member in 1957. His reincarnation gave the military great visibility and widen their participation in Soviet politics. Four months after achieving the apex of his career he was replaced as Defense Minister by Marshal Malinovskii - a member of the Stalingrad group - and stripped of his party membership. Speculation as to the reasons for this have dwelled on the perception that it was the result of a

clash between the Party and the military. However, there are indications that the reasons were multifaceted. There were five charges weighed against Zhukov that have been portrayed as leading to his removal: that he plotted the actual overthrow of the regime; disagreed on policy matters with civilian leaders; sponsored a cult of his own personality; administered the army in a "non-party" manner, and attacked military party organs. As Timothy Colton maintains, it was a combination of contingencies, such as Zhukov's personality, his status as a national hero, and his arrival in the Presidium as part of a precarious leadership coalition that produce the outcome in 1957.<sup>53</sup> The uni-casual theory that it was simply a manifestation of party-military conflict overlooks the several dimensions of Zhukov's relationship to military politics.

Although the military had no direct hand in ouster of Khrushchev in 1964, their acquiescence tended to bear out their displeasure with his decisions. It is suggested that the military may have received some prior assurances from the new leadership to correct the longstanding grievances against Khrushchev. Despite their political gains under his rule, his "harebrained schemes" had abashed the military on a global scale. The deployment and subsequent withdrawal of intermediate range nuclear missiles from Cuba was disastrous to the image of Soviet military power. Both the Party and the military had witnessed significant losses in status as a world power. Witnessing its

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<sup>53</sup> Colton, T. J., *Commissars, Commanders and Civilian Authority*, p. 195.

encirclement by the western "camp", the Soviet leadership coalesced and sought to rebuild a military power second to none.

#### **E. THE BREZHNEV ERA**

Upon his assumption of power, Leonid Brezhnev was witness to a military that was in a state of flux and a world subject to increasing international tension. The whiplash created by Khrushchev's liberal policies produced a highly conservative group of leaders in the Politburo. Brezhnev and his cohorts were all too familiar with the impressions left by the war. In 1966, thirty-two percent of the Politburo members had spent at least seven years of their earlier career in the military or military related occupations.<sup>54</sup> They had sympathy for military positions and gave them support. Brezhnev in unprecedented cooperation with the military leadership was determined to increase the size of the armed forces heralding in what came to be known as the "Golden Age" of Soviet military power. The justification for the rapid build up was supported by an intense propaganda campaign that reflected the urgency of military preparedness in the age of nuclear weapons. A symbiotic relationship developed between the soldier and the state as the Party catered to the military's every wish. It was estimated that defense spending rose by fifteen percent in 1968.

Brezhnev's consolidation of power was far from complete in the mid-sixties as members of the Politburo battled for the ranking positions. The fallout from this struggle created divisions between the Party and military leadership. A clear

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<sup>54</sup> Colton, T.J. and Gustafson, T. eds., *Soldier and the Soviet State*, p. 47.



illustration of this surrounded the death of the Defense Minister Malinovskii in 1967. The two aspiring people for the position were Dimitry Ustinov, a civilian in charge of the defense industry, and Marshal Andrei Grechko, a professional officer. Brezhnev was closely associated with both men during the war while serving as a political officer. After considerable debate that lasted nearly two weeks, the position was given to Marshal Grechko. The process which normally takes significantly less time was an indication of the significant differences among the Kremlin leadership. Several theories have been proposed as to why this was so with little hard evidence to support them. It was most likely that Brezhnev needed the support of the military lobby and therefore supported Grechko.

Grechko's main goals were to build a dual capable, balanced military based on a combined arms concept. In light of this, he maintained a particularly strong voice towards the subjects of arms control, budget allocations and the role of technology. According to one source Grechko was the most outspoken opponent of the SALT process and while reluctantly accepting the process, immediately began a guerilla campaign in hope to stall the process.<sup>55</sup> He was highly suspicious of the West. He was also very wary of the increased access the arms control agenda had provided the civilian academics. To the military mind, civilians, especially those from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, often appeared to

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<sup>55</sup> Herspring, D. R., *The Soviet High Command, 1967-1989: Personalities and Politics*, p. 75, Princeton University Press, 1990.



be driven primarily by a desire to reach an agreement, even if this would mean compromising (i.e. trading away Soviet advantage) with the other side.<sup>56</sup>

### 1. The Rise of Military Autonomy

It was during Brezhnev's leadership, that the General Staff began to reassert itself in defense decision-making. The General Staff was the primary beneficiary of the trend toward "scientific management".<sup>57</sup> This technocratic style was the result of the increasingly sophisticated technology that was being incorporated into modern weapons. It was based on deference to specialized agencies and the resolution of disagreements through bureaucratic compromise.<sup>58</sup> Once Khrushchev was ousted from power, the military lobbied for control of the military-technical sphere of defense decision-making. Marshal Zakharov (who was removed following the Cuban missile crisis) was reinstalled as Chief of the General Staff in 1964. He argued forcefully for "scientific approaches" to military planning and against "subjectivism and volunteerism", code words for Stalin's and Khrushchev's interventions into military affairs.<sup>59</sup> Approaches to strategy began to be formed on a highly technical basis. Integrated formulas and techniques

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<sup>56</sup> Herspring, p. 78.

<sup>57</sup> Rice, C., "The Party, The Military and Decision Authority in the Soviet Union", p. 61, *World Politics*, No.40, October 1987.

<sup>58</sup> Parrott, B., "Political Change and Civil-Military Relations" in Colton, T.J. and Gustafson, T. eds., *Soldiers and the Soviet State*, p. 49.

<sup>59</sup> Rice, C., p. 60.

such as operations research, systems analysis, and decision theory began to refine the laws of warfare. Specific principals of warfare were investigated by the General Staff Academy using historical precedents from the Great Patriotic War. The General Staff was able to eliminate its competitors largely because parallelism and overlapping authority could not be tolerated. Brezhnev was determined to acquire military power fast and in a race with technically and economically superior states resulting in a streamlined system for military planning.<sup>60</sup>

## 2. The End of the Golden Age

The early 1970's had brought about detente and recognition of the Soviet Union's superpower status. Brezhnev continued to pursue further arms control measures as the main pillar of Soviet foreign policy. He also became increasingly wary of Soviet economic problems. The military build up and emphasis on heavy industry had led to the demise of the domestic sector. Military expansion soured detente. The USSR began to assist the Cuban interventions in Angola (1975) and Ethiopia (1977), cheered the pro-Cuban takeovers in Grenada and Nicaragua, and invaded Afghanistan in 1979. In 1977, the Kremlin began deploying the SS-20 missiles targeted on Western Europe and then on Asia. These actions created a backlash to detente as military buildups in the West and in China rose to meet the challenge.

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<sup>60</sup> Ibid, p. 56.

At the height of detente in 1973, Marshal Grechko, the Minister of Foreign Affairs Andrei Gromyko and KGB Chief Yuriy Andropov all became full members of the Politburo. It is speculated that by making Grechko a full member of the Politburo, Brezhnev sought to placate Grechko and gain his support. However it was unsuccessful. Despite their close friendship, their relationship began to deteriorate as differences in opinion on arms control and defense expenditures continued. Grechko asserted that only Soviet military might could guarantee against a new world war. He balked at the signing of the Vladivostok Accords in 1972 suggesting that the Soviets had made unnecessary concessions. Brezhnev moved to oppose Grechko and reduce his status in the Defense Council. Beginning in 1973, he revised the membership of the Council to include the two ranking Central Committee Secretaries after himself, Suslov and Kirilenko. By adding these two members, civilian access to military decision-making was enhanced and greater political leverage applied to Grechko and the military membership of the Council.

The end of the "golden age" was signalled by Brezhnev's call for "full abundance" of consumer goods in 1974. The transition was accelerated by the death of Marshal Grechko in late April 1976. In a clear indication of his reaffirmed control over the military Brezhnev was pronounced Chairman of the Defense Council and promoted to the rank of Marshal of the Soviet Union. Shortly after the appointment of Dimitry Ustinov to the post of Defense Minister signaled a significant loss in the military's political clout as they lost their seat on

the Politburo and the Defense Council. Brezhnev in a clear sign of the new course to be taken in defense matters replaced the Chief of the General Staff Marshal Victor Kulikov with Marshal Nickolai Ogarkov. This appointment marks a watershed for civil-military relations for several reasons. Ogarkov was the first technical officer ever promoted to the position. With his background, he brought new emphasis on scientific and technical principals. His expertise in formulating strategy have been ranked with that of Frunze and Tukhachevskii. In stark contrast to Ustinov, who had little military-technical background, Ogarkov's expertise gave the military greater autonomy in the military-technical sphere. Ogarkov because of his personality was very outspoken. He had opposed the Grechko and Kulikov on several issues. His advocacy of an imminent scientific-technological revolution in military affairs, rejection of the longstanding preference for tried and true weaponry and his authorship of a highly controversial plan to reorganize the command and control system put him in good standing with Brezhnev.

### 3. Ogarkov's Opposition

Initially Ogarkov worked closely within the parameters laid down by the leadership - the military would have to do more with less. Shortly after assuming the position of Chief of the General Staff, Ogarkov stated that the army and the navy "had everything necessary to defend the Soviet Union."<sup>61</sup> However,

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<sup>61</sup> Herspring, D.R., *The Soviet High Command*, p. 156.



his complacency with the leadership changed as his initial expectations of economic recovery and arms control suffered setbacks. Specific issues of concern were: the implementation of the West's "two track" approach towards NATO, the SALT II treaty was not ratified by the U.S. Congress, and the U.S. military build up under the Carter and Reagan administrations. In 1980, Ogarkov gave his first signs of disquiet over the dual track decision on INF. He warned:

It [the missile deployment] would not only disrupt the approximate balance of medium range nuclear missiles systems that has been created in Europe, but would also lead to a sharp qualitative change in the political-military situation since it would create the threat of surprise suppression of our strategic nuclear forces.<sup>62</sup>

Ogarkov became increasingly at odds with both Brezhnev and Ustinov concerning the military's budget and detente. His focus on high technology weapons demanded further increases and investment in military spending. By using arguments from the 1960's, Ogarkov warned against the sole reliance on nuclear weapons and the need for "proportional" development of conventional forces.

More than the usual ferment in civil-military relations began to occur through 1981-1982 concerning the stagnating economy and lack of definitive leadership. Brezhnev had obviously seen the need to mend the civil-military divide in 1982. Two All Army-Party conferences were convened to articulate the leadership's position on defense. The conference in May 1982 was the first

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<sup>62</sup> Ibid, p. 39.



conference in nine years indicating the importance of the agenda.<sup>63</sup> Its objective was to quell the resistance to changes in budget allocations in favor of the domestic spending. Ustinov bolstered the "truly titanic work" Brezhnev had accomplished "by strengthening the motherland's economic and defensive might and consolidating its international positions and prestige and preserving peace on earth."<sup>64</sup> He also addressed Ogarkov's outspoken remarks that had increasingly become a thorn in the leadership's side. Issued in as a counterpoint to Ogarkov's call for more professional autonomy he reasserted "the CPSU formulates military policy and military doctrine and...guides the development of Soviet military science and military art".<sup>65</sup> In clear signal of support for Brezhnev cause, he consistently referred to him as the chairman of the Defense Council.

The second conference in October was a continuing effort to promote reduced military spending in lieu of the upcoming Central Committee meeting in November which would decide the budget. Brezhnev's speech echoed his indebtiveness to Ustinov for his support referring to him as a "loyal son of the Leninist Party".<sup>66</sup> Both Brezhnev and Ustinov voiced their strong support for the Food Program and the need to strengthen defense by using those funds already

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<sup>63</sup> Parker, *Kremlin in Transition: From Brezhnev to Chernenko, 1978 to 1985*, Vol. 1, Unwin Hyman, 1991, p. 155.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid, p. 156.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid.

provided with greater efficiency. Ustinov stressed the need for restraint in the face of imperialism's growing aggressiveness and praised the steady growth of Soviet might under Brezhnev.<sup>67</sup>

## F. THE YEARS OF SUCCESSION

### 1. Andropov

The death of Brezhnev on November 11, 1982 brought little change to defense policies and priorities. Yuri Andropov though decisively defeating Chernenko as head of the Party maintained a fragile balance of power. There ensued a power struggle between Andropov and Chernenko for the leading position in government. One result of the struggle left the posts of the Presidium of the USSR Supreme Soviet and the Chairman of the Defense Council vacant until June 1983. Marshal Ustinov was clearly the second most powerful person in the Politburo. The extent of his power left perception in the West that the military had the exclusive attention of Andropov. U.S. News had posed the question "Is the Military Taking over the Kremlin?" in light of Ustinov's influence.<sup>68</sup> Andropov was supported by Marshal Ustinov for his experience on foreign policy as well as his tough stance and discipline with regard to domestic matters. Despite early patronage to the military, Andropov was cool towards the

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<sup>67</sup> Parker, p. 173.

<sup>68</sup> Daniloff, N. and Knight, R., "Is Military Taking Over the Kremlin?", *U.S. News and World Report*, 23 January 1984, p. 26.

military and their influence. He continue to maintain that consumer goods have priority over further military spending. Andropov was instrumental in bringing a new generation of leadership to Moscow. Some of the new faces included Gorbachev, Ryzhkov, Ligachev, and Yakovlev. Of significance to the civil-military debate was the promotion of Sergei Akhromeyev in March 1983 to Marshal of the Soviet Union under cutting Ogarkov's primacy. Partisanship seemed to be infecting the supreme command as Ogarkov and Akhromeyev were lining up on opposite sides of the political barricade; Akhromeyev siding with Andropov and Ogarkov with Chernenko.<sup>69</sup>

Andropov's deteriorating health did not allow him to establish dominant support within the Politburo. His outlook towards military spending had not changed its course since Brezhnev. In the face of the increasing threat from NATO's modernization of its nuclear arsenal, he called for restraint stating that "We have sufficient strength to counter imperialism's military threat."<sup>70</sup> His intense propaganda scheme directed at breaking apart the western alliance ended in failure as modernization went ahead as scheduled in November 1983. The failure of these efforts would transformed Soviet foreign policy and evolve into Gorbachev's main platform of "New Thinking". At the June 1983 Plenum of the Central Committee he remarked:

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<sup>69</sup> Parker, p. 251.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid, p. 246.

"The threat of a nuclear war overhanging mankind causes one to reappraise the principal goals of the activities of the entire communist movement."<sup>71</sup>

Andropov continued to waver on the conditions of arms control with little result. Ogarkov had predicted the INF deployment would go ahead despite Soviet efforts to prevent it. He continued to press the civil-military boundaries with his harsh tones towards the West. Had it not been for the support of Chernenko his tenure as Chief of the General Staff would have ended sooner than it did. Events such as the shooting down of Korean Airlines flight 007 in 1983 continued to enhance Ogarkov's visibility in Soviet politics. Fully aware of Ustinov's poor health he continued to aspire to higher positions in the hierarchy. Andropov died on February 9, 1984. Rumors that Chernenko had bargained with Andropov for the top leadership of the Politburo came to light as within 24 hours of Andropov's death he was proclaimed General Secretary.

## 2. Chernenko

In his brief thirteen months in power, Chernenko was consistently plagued by ill health leading to policies that were often contradictory and marked by gridlock. During his leadership, civil-military relations were struck by the foreseen removal of Ogarkov in lieu of Ustinov's death and the continuation of the debate over defense budget and arms control.

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<sup>71</sup> Ibid, p. 262.

### 3. Ogarkov's Dismissal

Ogarkov continued to be outspoken and attacked the leadership's policies with impunity. However, rumors began to circulate concerning the Ogarkov's fate as Ustinov's health was in decline. There was speculation that Akhromeyev was being groomed for the position of Chief of the General Staff and that Ogarkov would replace the dying Ustinov. With Chernenko incapacitated by his illness a "temporary alliance" developed between Mikhail Gorbachev and Ustinov on defense and foreign policy issues.<sup>72</sup> On September 6, 1984 the announcement of Ogarkov's dismissal came. The causes of his removal from Moscow to command the Western theater of military operations (TVD) have been the focus of many studies. His outspokenness was surely a contributing factor. He continued to press for greater military spending and at the same time undermined the effectiveness of arms control. Some say that it was Ustinov that removed Ogarkov warning on his death bed to beware of his intentions. Dale Herspring supports the view that it was the outcome of an intense power struggle, to which the thought of a person like Ogarkov in a policy-making position was unbearable. What finally triggered his dismissal was that the civilian leadership feared a greater crisis concerning the replacement of Ustinov.<sup>73</sup> The decision to place Ogarkov in the Western TVD afforded him

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<sup>72</sup> Ibid, p. 398.

<sup>73</sup> Herspring, D. R., *The Soviet High Command*, p. 222.



control of the most important multi-front commands, and avoided another political showdown. It was a post the was ideally suited for maneuvering Ogarkov out of contention as Ustinov's successor without risking political backlash. The appointment of Marshal Sergei Sokolov allowed the civilian leadership to avoid another conflict in civil-military relations. Due to Sokolov's age however, his appointment was seen by the military as a conciliatory gesture. It conveyed an underlying message of mistrust and was clearly designed to neutralize the military during the imminent succession of Chernenko.

### III. CIVIL-MILITARY RELATIONS UNDER MIKHAIL GORBACHEV

#### A. LOOKING AT THE MILITARY WITH A "FRESH EYE"

Mikhail Gorbachev became General Secretary of the Communist Party in March 1985. He assumed this role in a period of heightened international tension in which the Soviet Union found itself isolated. The economy was stagnated from the endless years of military commitment. Gorbachev had as his single major goal, economic revitalization. As Stephen Meyer maintains he recognized two major obstacles to his economic restructuring. The first was the entrenched attitude of the bureaucracy and the labor force towards responsibility, accountability and authority.<sup>74</sup> His means of correcting these problems was the promotion of glasnost and democratization by basing rewards and sanctions based on performance not position. The second major obstacle was the defense agenda. It was not just the huge amount of resources being committed to defense, but rather the further commitment implied by threat assessments and requirements derived from traditional thinking. "More elbow room for economic restructuring required lifting the shadow of a further military buildup in the 1990's and beyond which in turn meant that Gorbachev had to gain control over

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<sup>74</sup> Meyer, S. M., "The Sources and Prospects of Gorbachev's New Political Thinking on Security", *International Security*, Vol.13, No.2, Fall 1988, pp. 128-129.

and restructure the defense agenda."<sup>75</sup> An early example of the party's increased control over the military was clearly reflected by the conspicuous absence of any military representatives atop of Lenin's mausoleum during Chernenko's funeral. Gorbachev viewed the military through a different "historical lens" than his predecessors, placing him at odds with the older generation of leadership. The building of the Soviet military had indeed been a noteworthy achievement of previous regimes, but it was now on the threshold of rapid depreciation by western technological challenge. Seen in this light, Gorbachev sought to diffuse East-West tension and provide the ideological impetus to revive his economy through his "new political thinking". The formal announcement of his platform was conducted at the Twenty-Seventh Party Congress in February 1986. A watershed in civil-military relations had emerged.

### 1. New Thinking, Perestroika and Soviet Security

The ideas behind "New Thinking" are not new. They have been used by Soviet and Western writers throughout the 1970's and 1980's. What is new is that they have been joined together to form a cohesive or coherent view of world politics. Several points of new thinking had a direct impact on future civil-military relations. The first concerned the realization that the issues concerning all of mankind at the international level were becoming more interdependent. Gorbachev stressed the need for cooperation on global issues and "pooling the

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<sup>75</sup> Ibid.

efforts of humanity for the sake of its self preservation."<sup>76</sup> A specific issue that required cooperation was security in the context of the nuclear age. A fundamental principal is of war prevention: "Nuclear war can not be a means of achieving political, economic, ideological or any other goals...Nuclear war is senseless; it is irrational...they would neither be winners nor losers in a global nuclear conflict: world civilization would inevitably perish."<sup>77</sup> Gorbachev went further to emphasize that conventional war with the advent of sophisticated technology "would now be comparable to nuclear war in its a destructive effects."<sup>78</sup> With this as a pretext, he emphasized that security is "indivisible". "It is either equal security for all or none at all."<sup>79</sup> "Universal", or mutual security he stated must proceed along a broad front and bear in mind unilateral steps could not be taken "for fear that they may serve as temptation for the advocates of global national interests".<sup>80</sup> Gorbachev condemned the issue of nuclear deterrence stating that "security can no longer be assured by military means -

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<sup>76</sup> Gorbachev, M. S., *Perestroika: New Thinking for Our Country and the World*, Harper & Row, New York, 1987, p. 137.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid, p. 140.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid, p. 150.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid, p. 149.

neither by use of arms or deterrence, nor by continuous perfection of the sword and the shield.<sup>81</sup>

Gorbachev gave new impetus to foreign affairs by suggesting that the only way to achieve security is through diplomatic means and disarmament. "In our age, genuine and equal security can be guaranteed by constantly lowering the level of the strategic balance from which nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction should be completely eliminated."<sup>82</sup> He emphasized that all military alliances should be disbanded and the European direction of Soviet foreign policy was the "most important one." Referring to Europe as "Our European Home" he appealed for closer economic and cultural ties and integrated security arrangements. Using the idea of "security for all"<sup>83</sup> he emphasized the need for Europe to dissociate themselves from the dangerous extreme of American policy. "The world currently stands at a crossroads he stated, and in which direction it will pursue depends largely on Europe's political position."<sup>84</sup>

In what would become the most drawn out debate within the context of civil-military relations was the issue raised by "reasonably sufficient" levels of defense and the doctrine of defensive defense otherwise known as non-offensive

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<sup>81</sup> Ibid, p. 141.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid, p. 207.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid, p. 209.



defense. These issues signified the largest encroachment by civilian leaders into what was once the military's domain and will be discussed below.

In sum, Gorbachev's ideology was the touchstone that fundamentally altered the civil-military framework. Gorbachev's promotion of a "comprehensive system of international security" provided a flexible grab bag to overshadow the military. Military power was devalued and perceived as complicating perestroika by absorbing large resources needed for industrial modernization and impeding the development of cooperative international relations. The military would soon find its once autonomous position under attack from all sectors of society and its political clout eroded. Disarmament and arms control received increased priority as a means to facilitate domestic economic recovery.

## 2. Early Military Reaction

Gorbachev laid out his plans for the military in a speech at Minsk in July 1985. The details of the "secret speech" are unavailable but several sources indicate that the principal issues concerned personnel reforms and the need to reinvigorate the civilian economy by using technology from the military-industrial sector. It was thought that Gorbachev's remarks may have been so harsh that the text could not be published. The General Staff evidently reacted with "shock and horror" to Gorbachev's impressions of the military's organization.<sup>85</sup>

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<sup>85</sup> Gelman, H., *Gorbachev's First Five Years in the Soviet Leadership: The Clash of Personalities and the Remaking of Institutions*, RAND Corporation, May 1990, p. 86.

Early response by the military was met with both ambivalence and resistance. The High Command felt that the sluggish economy was the problem of society and the party, not the military's. However, they also welcomed the prospect of a stimulated industrial base for improved weapons technology. Perestroika was promoted in generally three forms: closeness to the people (*blizost' k lyudyam*), exactingness (*trebovatel'nost*), and personal responsibility (*lichnaya otvetstvennost'*)<sup>86</sup> Essentially these terms implied that officers would have to accept greater responsibility for the performance of their men and increase the effectiveness of their managerial activities. The drive was to increase the performance and attitude of military personnel. Responsibility for the implementation was placed with the Main Political Administration (MPA).

New Thinking and perestroika did not begin to find resonance within the military establishment until early 1987. Marshal Akhromeyev, was the first to signal his acceptance of new thinking following the Twenty Seventh Party Congress. As a signal of his consensus with the civilian leadership he revised the one volume edition of the *Military Encyclopedic Dictionary* that had appeared under the editorial direction of Marshal Ogarkov. In it he made a clear statement paralleling the tenants of Gorbachev's new thinking. Under the definition of military strategy he states that "the most important task of Soviet military strategy

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<sup>86</sup> Herspring, D. R., "On Perestroika: Gorbachev, Yazov, and the Military", *Problems of Communism*, July-August 1987, pp 100-101.

is working out the problems for preventing war.<sup>87</sup> The renewed accent on preventing war and toning down anti-western sentiment reflected the efforts Gorbachev was making at Geneva and Reykjavik on arms control and disarmament.

Sokolov's backsliding continued throughout 1986. It was not until Armed Forces Day, February 1987, that he publicly stated that war prevention was the "main proposition" of Soviet military doctrine. In late May a major declaration by the Warsaw Pact summit in Warsaw stated categorically: "the use of military means for resolving any disputed question is intolerable in the present conditions."<sup>88</sup> It elaborated their ultimate goal was the reduction of the armed forces and conventional armaments down to a level when neither side, in ensuring defense, would have the means for a sudden attack on the other side or foe starting offensive operations in general.<sup>89</sup>

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<sup>87</sup> Parker, *Kremlin in Transition: Gorbachev, 1985 to 1989*, Vol. 2, Unwin Hyman, 1991, p. 171.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid, p. 171.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid.

## B. RADICALIZATION

### 1. Personnel Changes

The pace of reform was sluggish and a source of frustration for Gorbachev. Conservative forces within the military continued to dominate and provide an impasse to reform. One of the earliest moves by Gorbachev to assert his control over the military was the appointment of General Dimitry Yazov to the position of Deputy Minister of Defense for Personnel. Gorbachev had been impressed early on by Yazov's performance in the Far East. In Gorbachev's opinion Yazov showed himself to be a "courageous and principled Communist"...he showed devotion to principal in attacking corruption and protectionism...which had literally put to root many echelons of cadres."<sup>90</sup> Yazov replaced Ivan Shkadov, who in the wake of the Korean Airlines shoot down in September 1983, had pressed for greater authority for commanders and more resources for the military.<sup>91</sup> A great deal of resentment among senior officers developed as Yazov acted as Gorbachev's point man for the removal of personnel not supportive of perestroika.

With Yazov in place, restructuring finally began to hit the military establishment with a more noticeable force. Akhromeyev foreshadowed the coming events in his Armed Forces Day article calling for an "influx of fresh

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<sup>90</sup> Gelman, H., *Gorbachev and the Future of the Soviet Military institution*, Adelphi Paper, No. 258, Spring 1991, Brassey, p. 35.

<sup>91</sup> Parker, *Kremlin in Transition: Gorbachev, 1985-1989*, p. 178.

forces into the leadership's posts."<sup>92</sup> There was growing pressure on the Sokolov's performance during the first half of 1987. He was moving with the flow of perestroika while at the same time slowing its advance. His animosity towards Gorbachev dated back to his succession of Ustinov as Defense Minister. He had been snubbed by the leadership in his bid for full membership in the Politburo and remained only a candidate to the position. Sokolov's career ended with surprising suddenness when nineteen-year-old Mathius Rust buzzed the Lenin mausoleum and landed his Cessna aircraft on the edge of Red Square on the evening of May 28, Boarder Guard Day. Within twenty four hours of the incident, Sokolov's retirement was announced by a Supreme Soviet decree along with the firing of the Air Defense Chief Koldunov. Yazov was promoted as Defense Minister and replace Sokolov as a candidate member to the Politburo a month later.

The removal of Sokolov ushered in a wave of personnel changes at all levels of command. Table (I) indicates the significance of Gorbachev's changes.<sup>93</sup> As of 1989 Gorbachev had made six change in the Ministry of Defense Collegium, which represents the top military leadership, and includes the Minister of Defense and his sixteen deputies. This in addition to the seven changes made during the first two years, brings a total of fifteen changes to the seventeen member

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<sup>92</sup> Ibid.

<sup>93</sup> Zamascikov, S., *Changes in the Soviet Military Leadership Since 1987*, The RAND Corporation, N-3188-USDP, December 1990, p. 2.



Collegium. The officers that replaced those that were removed were recognized for their politicized attitudes and support for perestroika. The new appointee's were also much younger, as the average age was 63 years.<sup>94</sup> Several articles written by

**Table I: NEW APPOINTMENTS IN REGIONAL COMMANDS, 1972-1989.**

YEAR	APPOINTMENTS
1972-1973	10
1975-1976	10
1977-1978	9
1979-1980	11
1981-1982	10
1983-1984	12
1985-1986	15
1987-1988	20
1989	12

these officers indicate that they are more attuned to issues such as the nationality problems, the anti-corruption campaign and organizational restructuring in the military.

Gorbachev preferred to select officers making up two distinct groups; the Far Easterners and the Afghantsy.<sup>95</sup> Among the Far-Easterners were Army Generals Ivan Tret'yak, and Vladimir Govorov, Commander in Chief of the Air Defenses and head of the USSR civil defense respectively. The appointment of Colonel General Mikhail Moiseev, also from the Far Eastern district, as Chief of the General Staff in December 1988 was a radical step to undermine the authority of the military. Moiseev had never held a high level post prior to his selection and was promoted over several senior qualified officers with the approval of

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<sup>94</sup> Herspring, D. R., "The Soviet Military and Change", *Survival*, Jul/Aug, Vol. 31, No. 4, 1989, p. 325.

<sup>95</sup> The Afghantsy were officers who had gained combat experience during the war in Afghanistan. Zamascikov, S., *Personnel Changes in the Soviet Military*, p. 8.

Yazov. It was clearly evident that Gorbachev did not want a military genius; all he needed was a younger, unconnected military organizer whose major quality was loyalty.<sup>96</sup>

Participation in the war in Afghanistan was seen as a positive step towards a successful career in the military. Ironically, the initial invasion was not sanctioned by the military as the decision seems to have been concluded between Brezhnev, Ustinov and Gromyko without the consulting the military.<sup>97</sup> The Afghantsy have established a reputation of being "difficult" and unwilling to compromise and often inclined toward getting in trouble with their superiors. Arguments and dissociation among other officers who "were not" in the war became increasingly prevalent.<sup>98</sup>

## 2. The New Political System and Civilian Dominance

In addition to the profound adjustments in military personnel, Gorbachev also introduced a host of aspiring players from outside the uniformed ranks into the decision-making process. Institutions were restructured and streamlined to effectively carry out reform. The result was a significant loss in military influence and autonomy in defense decision-making.

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<sup>96</sup> Hauner, M. and Rahr, A., "New Chief of Soviet General Staff Appointed", *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*, RL 546/88, December 16, 1988, p. 3.

<sup>97</sup> See Varennikov's interview *Ogonyok*, No. 12, 1989. Varennikov was a member of the Soviet High Command in charge of operations in Afghanistan, in Zamascikov, S., *Changes in the Soviet Military Leadership Since 1987*, p. 10.

<sup>98</sup> Zamascikov, S., p. 8.

One of the earliest means of enhancing civilian control over the military was the restructuring of the Defense Council. The Defense Council served in different historical capacities and was often a reflection of the Soviet leaders particular style of controlling the military. The Council served as the main forum of civil-military interaction. It is the only body that had the power to coordinate the operational activities of all military and security forces.<sup>99</sup> The Council had four major functions. The most significant function concerned the adoption and confirmation of the biggest strategic military programs with an emphasis on hardware allocation, development and improvement.<sup>100</sup> In the more recent context, the Council was also involved in the debate concerning arms reduction, cuts in programs, and the conversion of military production facilities to civilian use. As a second function, the council evaluated the decisions already put into effect such as the strategic consequences of arms control decisions. Of considerable relevance during Gorbachev's tenure was the consideration of unilateral initiatives discussed below. Third, the Defense Council oversaw the internal organization and deployment of the armed forces, including inter alia, such matters as mobilization readiness plans, and conscription and manpower policies.<sup>101</sup>

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<sup>99</sup> Yasman, V., "The Internal Security Situation in the USSR and the Defense Council", *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*, RL 398/89, September, 1, 1989, p. 9.

<sup>100</sup> Gelman, H., *Gorbachev and the Future of the Soviet Military Institution*, p. 16.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid.

Finally, the Council decides Soviet strategy and doctrine. It was within this domain that Gorbachev launched his program for military reform.

The Defense Council inherited by Gorbachev had atrophied. Gorbachev, commenting on the Councils structure prior to reform, stated "that its functions lead to the concentration of the whole problem literally into the hands of several men...if not into just one man's hands, and we are reaping the fruits of this...."<sup>102</sup> He quickly established a coalition that promoted his reforms by fundamentally changing the membership of the Council. Traditional positions occupied by the General Secretary, the Prime Minister, the Defense Minister, and the Chief of the General Staff were kept in place. However, in order to broaden the consensus of military and civilian opinion, additional members were added. On the military side these included the heads of the service branches at the Deputy Defense Minister level as well as the addition of the Chief of the Main Political Directorate.<sup>103</sup> The military membership was offset by the addition of the senior Central Committee Secretary in charge of military industry, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, the KGB chairman, and the head of the State Planning Committee. For the first time since Stalin's day, Gorbachev had brought all of the important national security interests and players together around one table.<sup>104</sup>

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<sup>102</sup> Fukuyama, F., "Soviet Civil-Military Relations and the Power Projection Mission", in Gelman, H., *Gorbachev and the Future of the Soviet Military Institution*, p. 16.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid, pp. 16-17.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid.



In addition to the Defense Council there was another body created sometime after 1986 within the Politburo to coordinate the evolution of Soviet arms control positions. Known as the Commission for Arms Control Coordination, its specific task was to deal with the military and technical aspects of international politics including the preparations for talks on arms reductions.<sup>105</sup> Lev Zaykov was made chairman with additional membership provided to fellow politburo members Edward Shevardnadze, then the Minister of Foreign Affairs, and Alexandr Yakovlev, head of the Central Committee Commission for International Policy. According to an interview with the Zaykov the commission contained leaders of the sub-politburo rank from the defense ministry, the KGB, the military industrial commission of the Council of Ministers (the VPK) and other departments.<sup>106</sup>

The commission also had working organ associated with it called the "interdepartmental group".<sup>107</sup> Experts from the Ministry of Defense, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, scientists and experts from the USSR Academy of Science and scientific research centers of the General Staff. A fundamental role was also delegated to the International Department of the Central Committee, in which a special subcommittee, lead by Oleg Baklanov, prepared arms negotiations agenda.

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<sup>105</sup> Gelman, H., p. 12.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid.



By far the most important individuals to significantly change the scope of civil-military relations were Shevardnadze, and Yakovlev. This coalition combined to assert its dominance in all spheres of defense and foreign policy and place it under the guise of a "comprehensive strategy for international affairs". Gorbachev's close alliance with these men gave them substantial political clout over the military. Under the tenets of new thinking, the emphasis on diplomatic means for achieving international stability was interpreted by the Foreign Minister and Yakovlev as a mandate to monitor the actions of the military. The pace of the East-West negotiations starting in 1985, also allowed those bureaucracies directly involved greater access.

Immediately after assuming his post in 1985, Shevardnadze conducted a wholesale purge of the ministry, as seven out of eight first deputies were replaced by those sympathetic to new thinking. In 1986, the MFA created the Directorate of Arms Control and Disarmament. The Scientific Information Center was implemented to link decision making bodies to outside experts and coordinate academic research.

Other institutions quickly developed at the insistence of Gorbachev. The International Department of the Central Committee created a Department of Military Affairs and Disarmament headed by Lt Gen Victor Stardubov, an expert in arms control. A number of defense institutes created under Khrushchev's leadership have been allowed increased access to the defense decisions. Among the two dozen or more of these institutes, the most important include the Institute

of the USA and Canada (IUSAC), and the Institute of World Economics and International Relations (IMEMO).

Gorbachev's strategy to assert greater control over the military was evident by the shift in decision-making power of the Central Committee to the Supreme Soviet. At the Nineteenth Party Conference in June 1988, Gorbachev proposed the creation of an "effective mechanism" to ensure the renewal of the political system.<sup>108</sup> In an effort to promote popular support for perestroika he called for the election of a new Congress of People's Deputies who would in turn elect a Supreme Soviet to replace the existing rubber stamp body. Despite resistance, a reconstituted Supreme Soviet was formed in December 1988. The new Supreme Soviet had the authority to "appoint the Defense Council, replace the higher command of the armed forces, define principal defense and national security measures, call a general or partial mobilization, declare war, and be responsible for decision on using military contingents should it be necessary to meet international treaty based commitments to maintain peace and security."<sup>109</sup> Another provision was added stipulating that the job of the Chairman of the Defense Council was reserved for the Chairman of the Supreme Soviet - Gorbachev - putting his position as head of the Defense Council on a new

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<sup>108</sup> Van Oudenaren, J., *The Role of Shevardnadze and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in the Making of Soviet Defense and Arms Control Policy*, RAND Corporation (R-3898-USDP), July 1990, p. 62.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid, p. 63.

constitutionally enshrined basis. Despite this effort, an effective mechanism to control and coordinate military affairs did not result.

In June 1989, the newly elected Supreme Soviet formed a joint Committee for Defense and State Security of the Council of the Union and the Council of the Nationalities.<sup>110</sup> The committee membership consisted of forty-three members, nineteen of whom are employed in the defense industry. Other representatives included a number of military officers, academics, intellectuals and industrial executives. Although it was originally designed to be the watch dog of the defense establishment, its military representation gave the committee little impetus to promote significant reform.

The actual amount of influence these groups had is questionable. However, the fact that they have broader access to military data and policy produced additional pressure on the military to generate precise policy with respect to troop and hardware deployment. There were numerous signs of mounting military backlash against the unwelcome meddling in defense matters by what the High Command regarded as "self-promoting academic dilettantes."<sup>111</sup> While Gorbachev provided a broader role to civilians, the military still constituted a substantial force in both the Defense Council and the various new committees.

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<sup>110</sup> Tsypkin, M., "The Committee for Defense and State Security of the USSR Supreme Soviet", *Report on the USSR*, RL 209/90, April 23, 1990, pp. 8-11.

<sup>111</sup> Lambeth, B. S., *Is Soviet Defense Policy Becoming Civilianized?*, RAND Corporation (R-3939-USDP) August 1990, p. 38.

There function as secretariat of each group gave them substantial control over the information provided to each forum. It was the General Staff's task to provide the agenda, briefings, and present options based on their expertise. Therefore, even though the membership of each panel was broadened, the military retained a traditional advantage over their civilian counterparts. Without an effective civilian staff to counteract the military's monopoly of the issues, the actual control the civilian leadership has over the defense debate remains questionable.

### **C. THE DEBATE OVER NATIONAL SECURITY POLICY**

As civilian access increased in the defense decision making process, mounting public criticism of the military occurred as well. The conclusion of the Intermediate Nuclear Forces (INF) treaty in 1987 brought heightened criticism to military policies from all sectors of society. Critics have accused the army of virtually every sin conceivable from incompetence and committing atrocities during World War II, to falsifying the historical truth in order to spare Stalin's image long after his death. Demands for radical cuts in the military's budget and force structure, a reduction of military service, an end to conscription and the adoption of a professional army; attacks on the personal privileges of generals and the Soviet army's role in the non-Russian republics became widespread. The decision to withdraw from Afghanistan, taken in late 1987, announced in February 1988 and put into effect on May 1988 contributed to the sweeping trend in the disillusionment to what one Soviet officer referred to as the "fall in the



prestige of the professional defender of the motherland."<sup>112</sup> Civil-military tension grew at an alarming rate. The military became highly critical of the reform process, and the close group associated with Gorbachev. This created a whiplash effect in Gorbachev's attitude toward the military as he began to shift to the political right. The major issues subject to sharp debate included: doctrine and defense organization, the budget, glasnost and secrecy, arms control, and nationality and internal order problems.

### 1. Doctrinal Revolution and Reorganization

The potential for a clash of perspectives was seen at two distinct levels of Soviet military doctrine. The socio-political level considers the nature, objectives, and initiation of war and is controlled by the political leadership. The military-technical level dealt with the issues of military strategy, science and operations and is considered the realm of the military professionals.<sup>113</sup> The two reflect the dichotomy between the prevention of war and the preparation for war... in peacetime the two need not clash, yet in a crisis the trade-offs between them are likely to be more intense.<sup>114</sup> The Soviets have always stressed their benign political intent when discussing doctrine at the socio-political level, but military strategy at the military-technical level has always emphasized the

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<sup>112</sup> Gelman, H., *Gorbachev and the Future of the Soviet Military Institution*, p. 27.

<sup>113</sup> Legro, J. W., "Soviet Crisis Decision-making and the Gorbachev Reforms", *Survival*, Vol. 31, No. 1, p. 243.

<sup>114</sup> Ibid.



primacy of offensive operations. Under Gorbachev, this dicotomy dissolved and the subjects within the military-technical sphere became subject to scrutiny as well.

A major area of disagreement between civilian leadership and the military was over the concept of "reasonable sufficiency" and the adoption of a defensive strategy. Change in military doctrine under Gorbachev was part of a general evolution that began in the late 1970's. The de-emphasis of achieving military superiority, and the nuclear stalemate between the superpowers began a fundamental revision in Soviet security policy. Marshal Ogarkov was one of the first to recognize the importance of high technology and the benefits of mobility in a future war. He down played the value of the giant stockpiles of strategic nuclear systems. It was within this context that the military successors under Gorbachev would debate future military doctrine.

During the very early stages of Gorbachev's leadership, he made it clear that restructuring the economy would require parallel changes in the military. The defense budget, which had occupied some 20-25 percent of the gross national product and continued to rise at the rate of two percent per year since the mid-1970's, was a prime target for cuts. During his speech to the Twenty Seventh Party Congress in February 1986, Gorbachev stressed that he was interested in "restricting military potential within the limits of reasonable sufficiency".<sup>115</sup> He

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<sup>115</sup> *Pravda*, February 26, 1986, in *Soviet National Security Policy Under Perestroika*, Hudson, G. E. ed. 1990, p. 180.

continued to refine his 1986 position stating that reasonable sufficiency is that level of military potential required to accomplish only "defensive tasks".<sup>116</sup> He stated further that the armed forces must be structured such that they "be sufficient to repel possible aggression, but not sufficient to conduct offensive operations.

Gorbachev's motivations for promoting the concept of reasonable sufficiency were clear. By emphasizing the increased role of political diplomacy the Soviets had realized that military might and brut force were no longer a productive means of policy. Therefore, they adopted a less subtle approach that sought to diminish western perceptions of the military threat by the Soviet Union and weaken the Western collective defense efforts. Arms control was one of the main pillars of this process. Reductions in Soviet military forces could then take place under less hostile encirclement. This would in turn free up the necessary resources needed to improve the Soviet economy. It would also reestablish party control through extensive debate.

The polemic over reasonable sufficiency developed on two levels: strategic nuclear and conventional. On the strategic nuclear level there was a consensus between the military and the civilians. They both agreed that there was room for large cuts in nuclear stockpiles while continuing to maintain parity. Reasonable sufficiency by most civilian analysts have asserted that Soviet strategic force

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<sup>116</sup> *Pravda*, April 1, 1987, in footnote 115.

structure needed to be both roughly equal in size to that of the U.S., and capable of inflicting unacceptable retaliatory damage.<sup>117</sup> Analysts from the Institute of the U.S. and Canada went even farther to assert that as long as the Soviet Union had the ability to inflict unacceptable damage, it would not need proximate nuclear parity to ensure Soviet security. They propose unilateral measures to reduce the size of the stockpile to avoid waiting for negotiated equal cuts.

The military leadership was prepared to accept deep equitable cuts in strategic forces. The High Command agreed that the huge stockpiles of nuclear weapons did not enhance Soviet security. However they rejected the idea of unilateral measures and nuclear inferiority in strategic systems. Any reductions would have to be mutual and roughly equal preserving parity.

At the conventional level, reasonable sufficiency had different connotations as it has been obscured by a campaign to characterize the Soviet and Warsaw Pact doctrine as fundamentally defensive.<sup>118</sup> Elaborated in 1986 at Budapest, and at its May 1987 meeting in East Berlin, the Political Consultative Committee (PCC) of the Warsaw Pact committed itself to the concepts of reasonable sufficiency. They also adopted a doctrine that was purely defensive and stated, henceforth the Pact would strive to maintain an East-West military balance at the lowest possible

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<sup>117</sup> Warner III, E. L., "New Thinking and Old Realities in Soviet defense policy", *Survival*, Jan/Feb, Vol. 31, No. 1, p. 21.

<sup>118</sup> Ibid, p. 22.

levels.<sup>119</sup> Sufficiency initially was equated with current NATO and Warsaw Pact force postures adequate to repulse the aggressor.

Defense Minister Yazov, although agreeing to the substance of the Pact's declaration made allowances for possible objection from leading military circles. He define sufficiency in rather vague terms saying that currently "it means precisely the magnitude of armed forces necessary to defend oneself against attack from outside forces."<sup>120</sup> In other words Yazov was continuing to advocate parity with the West.

A point made by Gorbachev that lead to splits among the military leadership and broad interpretations was that "the Soviet Union would not seek greater security over other nations", but at the same time "it could not accept inferiority".<sup>121</sup> The term "inferiority" used in this sense provided the source of controversy. Three groups within the military have articulated different positions. A pro-Gorbachev group represented by the majority of the High Command, maintained much of the same arguments as Gorbachev. However, they rejected unilateral or asymmetrical initiatives in arms control, while at the same time agreed that parity was not necessary. This group agrees that the U.S. remains a threat to Soviet interests and also see political means as the method of easing

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<sup>119</sup> *Pravda*, May 30, 1987.

<sup>120</sup> Hazan, B. A., *Gorbachev and His Enemies: The Struggle for Perestroika*, Westview Press, 1990, p. 128.

<sup>121</sup> Green, W. C. and Karasik, T., *Gorbachev and His Generals, The Reform of Soviet Military Doctrine*, Westview Press, 1990, p. 41.



international tension. They consider cuts in the military budget essential to promoting an economic recovery.<sup>122</sup>

A more undecided group within the military promotes a variant of reasonable sufficiency by referring to it as "sufficient defense."<sup>123</sup> This group acknowledges the need for reform in the abstract, but is opposed to cut of the military's needs. Strategic parity is strongly advocated, and they are highly critical of unilateral arms control proposals.

Oppositionist military leaders resort to the standard phrase, "reliable defense".<sup>124</sup> This group describes defense issues in the traditional means by advocating increased military expenditures and rejecting Gorbachev's intentions to alter Soviet doctrine. This group argues that reform in the military should serve to strengthen military discipline and improve weaponry and equipment.<sup>125</sup>

Military leaders maintain a different view on the subject of a defensive doctrine as well. They insist that while Soviet strategy was defensive, a capability to strike a counter-offensive blow was necessary because of NATO's reliance on a first strike with nuclear weapons. In October 1987, Dimitry Yazov argued that it is "impossible to rout an aggressor with defense alone" and that it was

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<sup>122</sup> Ibid, p. 42.

<sup>123</sup> Ibid.

<sup>124</sup> Ibid.

<sup>125</sup> Ibid.



necessary for Soviet forces "to conduct a decisive offense".<sup>126</sup> This caveat allowed the continued growth and development of offensive capabilities to occur. Lothar Ruhl disclosed recent evidence supporting this fact based on documents recovered from command centers in what was once East Germany (GDR).<sup>127</sup> He maintains that Soviet forces stationed in the GDR were conducting operational maneuvers and maintaining the equipment necessary to support deep offensive strike against NATO forces. Elaborate doctrine suggested a multi-front operation that would occur from the Baltic to the Adriatic Seas. There was also evidence that these exercises continued following the collapse of the Berlin Wall in 1989.

Gorbachev's announcement in December 1988 of the unilateral decision to cut 500,000 men and their associated equipment clearly rocked the military establishment. He made the decision despite a large group of objectors within the High Command. The sudden retirement of Marshal Akhromeyev was perceived by many analysts as a clear objection to Gorbachev's decision. It was also rumored that other in the military leadership had objected to the decision and the Minister of defense Yazov and Warsaw Pact Commander Kulikov might also be removed from their posts.<sup>128</sup> However, these were proven otherwise as

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<sup>126</sup> Van Oudenaren, *The Role of Shevardnadze and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in the Making of Soviet Defense and Arms Control Policy*, p. 24.

<sup>127</sup> Ruhl, L., "Offensive Defense in the Warsaw Pact", *Survival*, Vol. 33, No. 5, 1991, pp. 442-450.

<sup>128</sup> Hauner, M. and Rahr, A., "New Chief of the General Staff Appointed", *Radio Liberty Research*, RL 546/88, December 16, 1988, p. 3.

Akhromeyev assumed a more direct role in his capacity as advisor to the president and Yazov and Kulikov continued their support for reform.

## **2. The Military Under Attack**

The conclusion of the Intermediate Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty with the United States fulfilled many long standing objectives for the Soviet political leadership. Of greatest importance was the removal of weapons systems (Pershing II, GLCM's) that could hit targets in the Soviet Union. Another significant point was the Soviet perception that the treaty was the beginning of U.S. withdrawal from Europe and a common European security system was closer to becoming reality. The INF treaty was also seen as a major hurdle towards improving the USSR's position in the international community.

A significant fallout in civil-military relations also occurred as a result of the treaty. Because one major action taken by the Party-military phalanx in the Brezhnev Defense Council had been undone, the frame of reference that had produced that step became politically vulnerable. Tensions that had existed within the Defense Council began to move into the public light with the blessing of Gorbachev.<sup>129</sup> Harsh public criticism by civilian analysts and the press increased following the treaty signature. A significant attack by Alexander Bovin in 1987 initiated much of the debate over security issues. He criticized past defense decision-makers for the deployment of the Soviet SS-20 missiles that were

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<sup>129</sup> Gelman, H., *Gorbachev and the Future of the Soviet Military Institution*, p. 25.

being dismantled in lieu of the treaty provisions emphasizing the enormous expense that had been wasted.

The future foreign minister, Alexandr Bessmertnykh, lead the assault against the military decision-makers declaring "a number of decisions have not been clearly optimal" and that "somewhat different calculations could have been made...when our security goals were being defined"<sup>130</sup> Shevardnadze joined the fray by attacking the very foundations of military strategy and doctrine. In a scathing speech at the July 1988 foreign affairs conference, he criticized the military's perception of World War II arguing that "the lessons that had been derived from the war and that predetermined the main strategic, above all military institution of security, were not being assessed clearly enough in light of recent experience...the war showed that the stockpiles of weapons of the side subjected to the attack were not of decisive importance for rebuffing aggression."<sup>131</sup> He went on to put forward an unprecedented demand that henceforth, "Major innovations in defense development should be verified by the Minister of Foreign Affairs to determine whether they correspond juridically to existing international agreements and to stated political positions."<sup>132</sup> He insisted that "the carelessness in the military sphere, which in the past has been devoid

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<sup>130</sup> "The Art of Weighing Possibilities", *New Times*, No. 46, 1987, cited in Van Oudenaren, J., p. 19.

<sup>131</sup> Shevardnadze, E., "The 19th All-Union CPSU Conference: Foreign and Political Diplomacy", *International Affairs*, No. 10, October 1988, p. 19.

<sup>132</sup> Ibid.

of democratic control can, in the context of acute mistrust and controversial suspicion, cost the country a great deal....<sup>133</sup>

The attacks on the military began to cover a wider range of issue that had bedeviled the military leadership. It became readily apparent that the military was caught in a political cross-fire and began to be used a scape goat for the lack of economic progress made by perestroika. Caught between the imperatives of a political leadership determine to reform Soviet Society and the frustrations of a more and more resistive population, the military was blamed for social ills ranging from economic stagnation to shortcomings in higher education. Criticism came from not only from civilians but from reform minded officers with the military.

The diffusion of international tension facilitated by rapprochement with the West led to another intense civil-military debate sponsored by Gorbachev. The debate concern the conscription based system employed by the military to obtain manpower resources. Gorbachev's encouragement began at a Komsomol rally in November 1988, as he appealed for reforming the existing system. A few days later Colonel Alexander Savinkin promoted the idea of a transformation of the army into a relatively small and mainly volunteer, professional army to be supported by a network of local militia organizations.<sup>134</sup> He supported his

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<sup>133</sup> Ibid.

<sup>134</sup> Savinkin, Alex, "Is There a Professional Army in the Soviet Future?", *Report on the USSR*, Vol. 2, No. 1, 1989, p. 9-12.



radical views by the historical precedent set by Lenin in the 1920's [see Chapter II] and his efforts to revive the war-torn economy. Savinkin's ideas received a great deal of support from both civilian and military advocates. One chief proponent was Major Vladimir Lopatin, a member of the USSR Congress of People's Deputies. He circulated a draft military reform plan early in 1990 that called for a smaller, all volunteer, professional army, the virtual elimination of Party influence, a reduction military spending and afforded greater control to civilian leadership. An additional part of this proposal addressed the relationship between the center and the periphery. Lopatin's plan called for greater republican access to defense decision-making and urged the establishment of republican armies and territorial service. Lopatin's proposals became extremely popular among the lower and middle ranks of the officer corp.

There was significant military opposition to Lopatin's plan in the High Command which included Defense Minister Yazov and Marshal Akhromeyev. The Defense Ministry promoted their own draft proposal to counter Lopatin. This program amounted to a streamlining of the existing system. A reduction in manpower to between 3 - 3.2 million men would be spread out over all five services.<sup>135</sup> The Defense Ministry also stressed that military capabilities were to be maintained by the technical re-equipping of the armed forces and by enhanced training. Principal arguments for maintaining the current mixed

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<sup>135</sup> Foye, S., "The Soviet High Command and the Politics of Military Reform", *Report on the USSR*, Vol. 3, No. 27, July 5, 1991, p. 11.



professional and conscript force were that it was superior politically, economically and militarily. Yazov argued

"...Politically the current army is the most democratic system and accords with the principals of social justice. From the economic perspective, it ensures the most economical, rational utilization of societies resources allocated for defense needs. Militarily it is not inferior to a professional army, and in terms of a number of parameters is actually superior to it."<sup>136</sup>

Splits in the High Command over the military reform were publicly exposed when the Commander in Chief of the Navy, Admiral Chernavin, broke ranks and advocated (if only implicitly) a professional force offering "real benefits to seamen".<sup>137</sup> The former Chief of Staff of the defunct Warsaw Pact, Army General Vladimir Lobov also argued that the country now needed

"a more resolute turn toward the principal of universal voluntary enlistment for the army service, under which contract service would be offered to all. The switch to such a system should begin as soon as our economy emerges from the crisis situation."<sup>138</sup>

This argument became the consensus of the High Command and made the outcome of the debate contingent on the success of Gorbachev's economic returns.

Glasnost within the military opened a pandora's box of other issues that plagued the military. Charges were made by the public that the military was

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<sup>136</sup> Arnett R., and Fitzgerald, M., "Is the Soviet Military Leadership Yielding on an All-Volunteer Army", *Report on the USSR*, RL 145/90, March 21, 1990, p. 3.

<sup>137</sup> Mysyakov, D., "Chisty farvater", *Komsomol'skaya pravda*, February 21, 1988, cited in Tsypkin, M., "Will the Soviet Navy Become a Volunteer Force?", *Report on the USSR*, Vol. 2, No. 5, February 2, 1990, p. 5.

<sup>138</sup> Foye, S., "The Soviet High Command and the Politics of Military Reform", *Report on the USSR*, Vol. 3, No. 27, July 5, 1991, p. 11.

living in a closed, and privileged world separate and hostile to society. The officer corps was increasingly seen as exemplifying the old establishment. Public resentment turned into violence in the non-Russian republics as criminal acts perpetrated by civilians resulted in several deaths of Soviet officers. In a report issued by the Committee for Defense and State Security it was reported that the number of deaths had been increasing since 1987. Eighty five deaths, forty two of which were the result of premeditated murder occurred in 1989 alone.<sup>139</sup> This figure was up from only two deaths the previous year. Although the validity of the numbers is suspect, the trend in public hostility toward the military establishment was not.

Daily reports of corruption, violence, and mistreatment of military personnel appeared in the press. The harsh practice of hazing, though well known in the West, was publicly condemned. This public exposure had a demoralizing effect on the officer corps and servicemen in general. The increased social awareness promoted inter-ethnic disputes with the military. The number of mutinies and deserters increased. Nationality and internal order problems began to increase with the disillusioned society. Of particular significance was the fallout created by the military's involvement in the Tbilisi massacre. On the night of April 9, 1989, interior and regular army troops brutally suppressed a nationalistic demonstration in the main square of Tbilisi, in the republic of Georgia. Nineteen

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<sup>139</sup> Foye, S., "Murders of Soviet Officers", *Report on the USSR*, Vol. 2, No. 26, June 21, 1990, p. 11.

people died, mostly women, some from being beaten with shovels others from exposure to toxic gas.<sup>140</sup> A civil-military polemic raged as the parties concerned raced to pin the blame on the other. Moscow insisted that the order was given at the local level, while authorities in Georgia maintain that military authorities in Moscow directed the operation. In the subsequent investigation, the leader of the Tbilisi operation, Colonel General Igor Rodionov, then commander of the Transcaucasian military district invoked brutal criticism on the political leadership for failing to head off events that lead to military involvement. Rodionov was dismissed from his post as well as Chebikov of the KGB for their involvement. Rodionov's staunch criticism of the political leadership gained significant support of the conservative leadership in the military and as a result he was given the position as head of the prestigious Voroshilov Military Academy of the General Staff. From this vantage point Rodionov continued his assault on the political leadership. Specifically he attacked Shevardnadze as an "unprincipled person" and denounced Gorbachev's foreign policy as a succession of unilateral concessions.<sup>141</sup>

In the aftermath of Tbilisi the military became increasingly wary of internal intervention. The military's image had been shattered. Centrifugal forces within the Soviet periphery continued to deteriorate and effect the military's position.

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<sup>140</sup> Van Oudenaren, J., *The Role of Shevardnadze and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in the Making of Soviet Defense and Arms Control Policy*, p. 49.

<sup>141</sup> Gelman, H., *Gorbachev and the Future of the Soviet Military Institution* p. 41.

The manpower resources for which the military relied upon to sustain its force structure became unreliable. The Baltic republics as well as the Transcaucasus became political powder kegs of nationalistic dissent. They passed laws that prevented indigenous ethnic groups from serving outside their respective republics and promoted the avoidance of the draft. In January 1990, the political vulnerability of the military's manpower system was shown as the efforts by Yazov to mobilize reserve ethnic Russians to quell a disturbance in Baku resulted in strong public resistance requiring the effort to be subsequently abandoned. Further concessions to the republics by Gorbachev continued to alienate military leaders as he amended the 1967 Draft Law to permit nearly two hundred thousand college students to defer their service obligations. The result was a significant loss in combat readiness as replacement officers were no longer available to support the General Staff's plan for an efficient draw down of personnel mandated by unilateral cuts already in force.<sup>142</sup>

An alarming development began to take root in the military leadership as a result of their social malaise. They began to rally around a new found ideology promoted by Karem Rash, a previously unknown writer. His ideology was particularly appealing to the High Command as his ideas served to coalesce a disgruntled officer corp. Rash has propagated a myth about the Soviet military

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<sup>142</sup> Ibid.



as a knight in shining armor.<sup>143</sup> He insists the decision to invade Afghanistan was politically correct and uses a historical backdrop to promote the military as a new elite to replace the waning Communist Party in the Soviet Union.<sup>144</sup> In the era of perestroika "the military should feel that they are the backbone and sacred institution of a thousand years of statehood...At the turning points in history, the military was to be the main, real hope of the people and frequently fulfilled assignments that at the first glance seemed inappropriate for them...."<sup>145</sup> Referring to the tension in civil-military relations Rash said "If in the past officers were prejudice against civilians, it was because it seemed they lacked the commitment to the glory of the fatherland".<sup>146</sup> The military leadership in the face of harsh criticism from all sectors of society and in a deteriorating political system looked upon itself as the only means of promoting unity.

### 3. The Diplomatic Locomotive

Another significant cause of civil-military tension was the a result of the collapse of Communist power in Eastern Europe. The events which led to the collapse of Soviet power and its timing are well known and beyond the scope of this research. However, the withdrawal of Soviet forces from Eastern Europe and

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<sup>143</sup> Tsypkin, M., "Karem Rush: An Ideologue of Military Power", *Report on the USSR*, RL 330/90, July 13, 1990, p. 9.

<sup>144</sup> Ibid.

<sup>145</sup> Ibid.

<sup>146</sup> Ibid.



the demise of the Warsaw Pact alliance had specific consequences for civil-military relations. One clear effect on the military was the loss of the extensive buffer the territory had provided. The vast expenditure in defence resources built up over nearly half a century, had been lost almost overnight.

Another effect was the resentment and polarization of military opposition to Gorbachev that followed in its wake. Military opposition grew increasingly stronger with the demise of Communist power causing Gorbachev to redress his attitude towards the military. Outspoken conservative military leaders such as Colonel General Al'bert Makashov, vehemently attacked Gorbachev's foreign and domestic policies. He asserted "because the so-called victories of our diplomacy, the Soviet army is being driven without a fight out of countries which our fathers liberated from fascism."<sup>147</sup> He vowed that the Soviet Armed Forces would never accept "ideological surrender". He charged that domestic reforms had permitted the "ideological enemy" to divide soldiers from officers, and officers from generals.<sup>148</sup> An early reaction came from Gorbachev and his supporters. Using arguments from an economic perspective, Gorbachev retorted the "reasonable sufficiency" had not degraded the security of the USSR imploring the "Soviet Union spent up to eighteen percent of its national income to defense...a higher

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<sup>147</sup> Gelman, H., *Gorbachev and the Future of the Soviet Military Institution*, p. 41. See also Foye, S., "Military Hardliner Condemns 'New Thinking in Security Policy'", *Report on the USSR*, Vol. 2, No. 18, July 13, 1990, pp. 4-6.

<sup>148</sup> Foye, S., "Military Hard-liner Condemns 'New Thinking' in Security Policy", *Report on the USSR*, Vol 2, No. 18, July 13, 1990, p. 4.

proportion than any other country in the world".<sup>149</sup> Foreign Minister Shevardnadze in specifically defending the foreign policy with respect to the unification of Germany posed the question "Where lies the greater risk-in maintaining the division of a great nation that will inevitably strive for reunification or in unifying it the context of an all European settlement?"<sup>150</sup> Shevardnaze also cited that the military had been involved in all stages of the planning and apologized only for the domestic aspects of the re-deployment of troops and realized the hardship for military personnel.

As the policies of Gorbachev became more radicalized, he alienated a large following of military personnel he had specifically hired to support him. Fractures in the military had produced a debilitated military looking for its "man on horseback". As the situation in the republics continued to deteriorate Gorbachev was forced to grant concessions to the military in return for their support in maintaining the union.

#### 4. The Twenty-eighth Party Congress

The Congress convened on July 2, 1990. It provided a forum for an intense debate between civilian and military leaders. The focus of the debate centered on two specific issue with respect to military affairs. The first concerned the fallout associated Gorbachev's "new thinking" in foreign policy. Harsh

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<sup>149</sup> Ibid.

<sup>150</sup> Pravda, June 26, 1990, in Van Odenaren, J., p. 49.

criticism was thrown at the political leadership from the 269 military delegates that were present. The majority of those represented were drawn from the conservative High Command. Substantial evidence suggested that the representatives were manipulated by the High Command to ensure a predominately conservative group.<sup>151</sup> The assault was led by Major General Mikulin, head of the Political Administration of the Southern Group of Forces. He blamed new thinking for the loss of Eastern Europe, rejected Gorbachev's idea of a "Common European House" and contended that the Vienna conventional arms control talks would lead to Soviet unilateral disarmament.<sup>152</sup> This criticism was echoed in the remarks of Admiral Gennadii Khvatov who stated "We have no allies in the West...no allies in the East...and consequently we are back where we were in 1939."<sup>153</sup> Both Yazov and Moiseev were unwilling to engage the political leadership in the same harsh tones and were generally supportive of Gorbachev. The declaration by NATO leaders on July 5, 1990 stating that the blocs were longer adversaries and calling for joint action with Moscow formed a platform for Gorbachev supporters to engage military conservatives. Despite strong arguments by Gorbachev, Shevardnadze and others, the resolution on military affairs resulted in compromise. It affirmed that there was still a

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<sup>151</sup> Foye, S., "Defense Issues at the Party Congress" *Report on the USSR*, Vol. 2, No. 30, 1990, pp. 1-2.

<sup>152</sup> Ibid.

<sup>153</sup> Dahlburg, J. T., *Los Angeles Times*, July 6, 1990, in Foye, S., "Defense Issues at the Party Congress", *Report on the USSR*, Vol. 2, No. 30, 1990, pp. 1-2.

significant threat to the USSR and the international community was still unstable. The document called for a strengthening of defense while at the same time promoting the establishment of a comprehensive system of international security.<sup>154</sup>

The other fundamental issue affecting military affairs was the debate concerning the military-political organs. Since Gorbachev's attempt to curtail Communist Party access to state institutions, calls for depoliticizing the armed forces were increasingly popular. Again a compromise solution was established. Seen as a victory for the conservatives, the political administration was allowed to continue their activities but ceased to be an arm of the Communist Party. Its role was slightly redressed as their function was to conduct educational, cultural, and administrative work independent of the Party. Gorbachev was in no hurry to facilitate the complete removal of the Parties influence as it was seen as a "source of stability".<sup>155</sup>

## **D. THE CONSEQUENCES OF THE DETERIORATING UNION**

### **1. Further Institutional Reform**

Gorbachev found himself confronted with economic morass and a crumbling empire. He continued to grapple with the collective leadership of the 42 member Presidium of the USSR Supreme Soviet over the future course of

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<sup>154</sup> Ibid.

<sup>155</sup> Ibid, p. 3.



perestroika. The Politburo remained the nerve center of Soviet power and its conservative wing was able to block the implementation of radical reforms. In an attempt to overcome the paralysis of power created by Communist Party influence and to shore up a stable position safe from opposition, Gorbachev established the post of President. He was sworn in on March 15, 1990 by the Congress of People's Deputies.

Civil-military relations continued to evolve under the direction of the new President. Gorbachev's enhanced power allowed further changes to be made to the defense decision-making bodies that would function under his direction. Gorbachev hinted at major changes to the Defense Council as early as autumn of 1989. The proposed changes to the council's structure were revealed as a constitutional amendment in February 1990. It provided that the President would be "Supreme commander of the Soviet armed forces and chairman of the USSR *Security and Defense Council*."<sup>156</sup> The title of the Council reflected an interest by Gorbachev supporter to expand the previous Defense Council's role to include internal security as well. An important result of this enlarged role is that the secretariat of the council would also be expanded beyond the exclusive purview of the General Staff. Essentially, the secretariat would emulate the staff of the U.S. National Security Council and thereby reduce the Soviet military leadership's control of the agenda. By March 1990, all references to the Defense Council were

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<sup>156</sup> Gelman, H., *Gorbachev and the Evolving Soviet System for National Security Decisionmaking*, RAND Corporation (WD-5554-A), August 1991, p. 55.



deleted from the amendments proposed to the Congress. This suggested that the changes were being subjected to a great deal of behind the scenes debate. The revised amendment approved by the Congress, established a new Presidential Council. The Councils function was "to advise the president on foreign, domestic, and ensure the countries security."<sup>157</sup> Members of the Council were personally selected and approved by the President without consenting parliamentary approval. It was speculated that the Presidential Council replaced the Defense Council.<sup>158</sup> Initially Gorbachev and the chief of the General Staff both made statements to this effect. In an interview with the press following the Congress, Moiseev indicated that "it was his understanding that the Defense Council had indeed been abolished and complained that neither he nor any other military representative had been allowed to attend the Congress."<sup>159</sup>

It quickly became clear that the composition of the Presidential Council was unfit to replace the Defense Councils function as the membership did not include Lev Zaykov or Moiseev. In mid April Gorbachev announced that the Defense Council was still a viable working group. However, the Defense Council that prevailed was noticeably different from its predecessor. A General Staff official, Major General G. V. Zhivitor, noted that although many of the same positions

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<sup>157</sup> Ibid.

<sup>158</sup> Teague, E., "The Presidential Council Starts its Work", *Report on the USSR*, Vol. 2, No. 14, 1990, p. 1.

<sup>159</sup> *Kraznaya Zvesda*, March 16, 1990, in footnote 153.

remained the commanders of the armed services had been removed.<sup>160</sup> Considerable doubt and confusion continued to exist between political and military leaders as to the intentions of Gorbachev's institutional reforms. Eventually in mid-August Gorbachev dispelled doubts as to the Defense Council viability asserting that

An overhauled Defense Council had been set up and attached to the Presidential Council and the President...It would consider all issue affecting military activity and the construction of the armed forces.<sup>161</sup>

The Defense Council's existence was vividly recognized in August when for the first time in the history of the organization, the agenda of the council was publicly reported.

Gorbachev continued to further complicate the decision-making process when it was announced that the presidential council was being replaced with a Security Council in December 1990. The creation of the new Council was born out of the deteriorating situation between the center (Moscow) and the republics. It was a reflection of Gorbachev's desire to invent a mechanism that would give him direct personal control of the interwoven political, economic and coercive measures to deal with a crisis.<sup>162</sup>

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<sup>160</sup> *Kommunist Voorozhonykh Sil* (Communist of the Armed Forces), p. 27, No. 11, June 1990, signed to press May 31, 1990, cited in footnote 154.

<sup>161</sup> Gelman, H., *Gorbachev and the Evolving Soviet System fo National Security*, p. 65.

<sup>162</sup> Ibid.

## 2. Gorbachev's retreat

As the centrifugal forces of the republics began to pull apart the union Gorbachev's rhetoric and attitude began to move to the right. He realized that the army he had spent five years alienating was now the "bulwark" that would keep the union together. At the CPSU plenum in February 1990, Gorbachev tried to sound more accommodating to the military leadership by praising their efforts in the Caucasus and defending their position in society. He criticized the anti-military sentiments calling for a more respectful attitude towards the military. The chief of the General Staff criticized Gorbachev's commentary. He argued that Gorbachev failed to propose any specific measures to deal with the momentous problems currently overtaking the Soviet Union. Moiseev added that Gorbachev's comments failed to reflect the contribution made by the armed forces to Soviet national security and even belittled their role in an attempt to isolate the military from the people.

Gorbachev continued to placate the military leadership through numerous concessions. The most notable concessions were the promotion of Defense Minister Yazov to the rank of Marshal and the permission to hold military parades after years of denial. He also increased the benefits and salaries of servicemen. Several compromises were also made towards ongoing arms control negotiations with the United States that indicated military resistance. There was some momentary stiffening if not regressing on the START treaty negotiations. More significant was that during the spring and summer of 1990, Gorbachev held

up troop withdrawals from Eastern Europe and delayed the conclusion of the Conventional Forces Europe (CFE) treaty. The General Staff also prevailed over Shevardnadze and the civilian leadership following the conclusion of the CFE treaty in November 1990. They enticed Gorbachev into agreeing to a reinterpretation of the Soviet force structure in Europe that redefined three motorized rifle divisions as coastal defense forces, thus exempting their weaponry from the Treaty reductions. This episode clearly demonstrated a decline in the ability of the civilian leadership's ability to override military desires.

Gorbachev also delayed reprisals against outspoken military personnel and radical groups such as Soyuz (Union) which were consistently calling for his resignation and hard-line positions toward the republics. He made appointments that were suggestive of his intent to crackdown on the internal turmoil. Colonel General Boris Gromov was appointed first deputy Minister of the Interior in December 1990. Gromov was known for his conservatism and routine attacks on civilian critics of the military. He deplored the overly benign view of Western intentions promoted by pro-reformists. His promotion was seen as part of an ominous shift in emphasis from the use of the military against external enemies to use against internal ones. The appointment of KGB Major General Boris Pugo to the post of Internal Affairs Ministry was also reflective of this trend.

Gorbachev's patience with the republics had worn thin towards the latter part of 1990. Defense Minister Yazov had also had a change of heart as he had become a more outspoken critic of new thinking and was disillusioned by the



problems created by the independence minded republics. The inability to administer conscription; the emergence of irregular military formations outside central control; the increasing incidence of mutiny; a rising total of deserters and widespread seepage of arms from military stocks had a serious effect on the combat readiness of the military. The leadership's change in attitude toward using harsher means of control can be used to explain the events in February and September of 1990 that led to the speculation of a probable military putsch. On both occasions, troop movements around Moscow had prompted the alarm. Stephen Covington maintains that the troops were moved on Gorbachev's orders at the KGB chairman Kryuchov's recommendation.<sup>163</sup> Kryuchov had painted an alarmist's view about counter-revolutionary forces in Moscow that would attempt to overthrow the regime.

Gorbachev put his enhanced presidential powers to work as he tried to intimidate the republics. He made a series of decrees that authorized the armed forces to protect Communist Party property, to enforce conscription and to reply with force to any conduct they regarded threatening to themselves and their installations. Defense Minister Yazov issue a statement on Soviet television that stated that the armed forces had been ordered to protect military installations and

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<sup>163</sup> Covington, S., "Soviet Perspectives on the Current Dynamics of Perestroika", (Soviet Military Studies Office of SHAPE), January 12, 1991, in Gelman, H., *Gorbachev and the Future of the Soviet Military Institution*, p. 54.



personnel in areas racked by ethnic strife.<sup>164</sup> Yazov condemned "illegal actions" in a number of republics that were "undermining national security". These developments brought about the stunning resignation of Shevardnadze on December 20, 1990. Shevardnadze aim, as he stated in his resignation speech, was to jolt Soviet democrats out of their apathy and stand up to the reactionary forces bent on the return of a dictatorship.<sup>165</sup> On December 29, 1990 the Minister of Defense and Interior announced a directive that called for regular army units to join police and internal troops in conducting joint patrols ostensibly aimed at maintaining order. The directive was legalized by Gorbachev a month later created a contentious debate. On January 7, 1991, President Gorbachev ordered Soviet airborne troops into the three Baltic republics, Armenia, Georgia, Moldavia, and some regions of the Ukraine to enforce conscription regulations. The order precipitated further events that would embarrassed the military leadership and bring international scrutiny to Gorbachev's new agenda.

### 3. Towards a New Union

Following the events in the Baltic republics, it became increasingly evident that despite the Twenty-eight Party Congress and its call for the disengagement of the Communist Party from the military establishment, the Party

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<sup>164</sup> Keller, B., "Soviet Army Told to Use Force to Defend itself in the Republics", *The New York Times*, November 28, 1990, p. 1.

<sup>165</sup> Crow, S., "The Resignation of Shevardnadze", *Report on the USSR*, Vol. 3, No. 2, 1991, p. 6.

still had a wide following in the military. The unholy alliance between army and party served as a foundation for conservative resistance to reform. The officer corps was still overwhelmingly dominated by the Party (seventy percent of the officer corps and ninety percent of the high command). Promotions still continued to be skewed by political criteria and the cooperation between the armies political organs and its party organizations continued. The collusion between local party organizations and the military was plainly seen in the assault on the television building in Vilnius, Lithuania on January 13, 1991. The city's garrison commander claimed to have acted on the orders of a local "national salvation committee", which appeared to be a front for Pro-Moscow Communists and other conservative groups. In an attempt to make the linkages between the Party and military illegal, the USSR Committee for Constitutional Compliance, ruled that article forty-eight and article twenty of the armed forces regulation be suspended.<sup>166</sup> Gorbachev's half measures and flirtation with conservatives allowed the Communist Party to become a rallying point for the military. At the all Army Party Conference in March 1991, it was evident that the military was continuing its hard-line against further reform. Yazov blamed "new thinking" for

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<sup>166</sup> Article 48 stipulates that commanders are bound to implement policies promulgated by both the Soviet government and the Communist Party. Article 20 deals with garrison and guard service regulations and obliges garrison commanders to obey the orders of local Party bodies as well as those of local soviets. Cited in Stephen Foye, "Oversight Committee Rejects CPSU Control over Armed Forces", *Report on the USSR*, Vol. 3, No. 16, 1991, p. 5.

the problems that existed in the military and argued for uniformed Communists to take vigorous action to fight these trends. According to Yazov

"under these conditions the vanguard role and moral and political authority of the Party, the successful conduct of perestroika in all sphere of society - including defense, depends to a large extent on the rallying ability of the armed forces one million-strong Party organization.<sup>167</sup>

The military reform program promoted by the Defense Ministry continued to endure support among the High Command over Lopatin's agenda. Little was changed to the program despite the ramifications of the Gulf War and the final dissolution of the Warsaw Pact. A fundamental change was achieved with respect to center-periphery relations. Moves toward negotiating a modus operandi between the Union government and the republics was spearheaded by Moiseev and the General Staff.<sup>168</sup> One of Moiseev's deputies, General Konstantin Kobets, was appointed a head of the RSFSR state committee responsible for defense. This was accomplished despite the strong objections of military hard-liners including Yazov and the chief of the MPA.

Gorbachev's rapprochement with the leaders of nine of the Union's republics and the election of Boris Yeltsin as President of the RSFSR acted as a catalyst for further conflict between Gorbachev and conservatives including Yazov. The High Command continued its strong appeal for a unified, multinational army under a

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<sup>167</sup> Foye, S., "Rhetoric from the Past: The First All-Army Party Conference", *Report on the USSR*, Vol. 3, No. 18, 1991, p. 7.

<sup>168</sup> Foye, S., "The Soviet High Command and the Politics of Military Reform", Vol. 3, No. 27, July 27, 1991, p. 11.

unified command which put them at odds with the Gorbachev camp and a large sector of lower ranking officers and servicemen. The draft Union treaty, which was an attempt by Gorbachev to hold the union together by delegating additional powers to the republics, was not popular with military conservatives. The draft treaty contradicted the military's interests by calling for republican participation in, among other things "defining the military policy of the Union" and "national security strategy", "resolving questions connected with troop activities and the locating of military facilities on republican territories," and "directing defense complex enterprises."<sup>169</sup> The conservatives of the High Command also suffered a huge set back as a result of Boris Yeltsin's election. Led by the military-political leadership, a significant campaign was mounted to rally military members to vote against Yeltsin. The results only served to illustrate the fractures in the military leadership, as Yeltsin had won considerable support in many military district. It was reported that he won eighty-one percent of the vote in the Pacific and Indian Ocean Fleets.<sup>170</sup> It has been speculated that these developments led to the much publicized "right-wing coup" led by Prime Minister Valentin Pavlov in the USSR Supreme Soviet on June 17, 1991.<sup>171</sup> The so-called "coup" or "insurrection" by Pavlov had received an emotional following by not only the Defense Minister by

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<sup>169</sup> *Krasnaya zvezda*, May 1, 1991, pp. 1-2, cited in footnote 164.

<sup>170</sup> *The Guardian*, June 15, 1991, cited in Foye, S., *Gorbachev's Return to Reform: What Does it Mean for the Armed Forces*", *Report on the USSR*, Vol. 3, No. 28, July 12, 1991, p. 6.

<sup>171</sup> *Ibid.*



also the KGB chairman and the Minister of the Interior. Pavlov's bid to enhance his powers over Gorbachev were quickly thwarted.

The Summer of 1991 saw Gorbachev jockeying for position among reformers and conservatives. There was intense pressure on Gorbachev and the future success of his reforms leading up to the Group of Seven summit.<sup>172</sup> It was Gorbachev's intent to appeal for further foreign investment in the Soviet Union's economic reforms. However, the growing international concern over Gorbachev position with respect to the republics had created a great deal of wariness on the part of some of the Group of Seven. It was therefore necessary for Gorbachev to demonstrate his control over military and political conservatives. This was done in a series of harsh statements to put the military in its place. On June 21, he called for new defense cuts and rejected complaints made by the Defense Minister during the insurrection. On June 22, the fiftieth anniversary of the German invasion during World War II, Gorbachev sought to further eviscerate the Communist Party's role in the military. The historiography of the war had often been a political battlefield in the civil-military debate under Gorbachev. While conservative forces of the High Command argued of the importance the Communist Party had played during the war, Gorbachev made no mention of it

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<sup>172</sup> The Group of Seven consisted of the leaders from the United States, Great Britain, France, Germany, Canada, Italy, and Japan.



during his anniversary speech.<sup>173</sup> He also issued a decree that gave the Defense Minister and the chairman of the KGB one month to make a proposal to significantly alter the role of military councils.<sup>174</sup> Gorbachev's decree stated that the military council would be subordinated to Soviet Law and represented an effort to replace Party control at the local level with democratic government organs.<sup>175</sup>

#### 4. The August 1991 Coup d'état

Shortly after six in the morning (Moscow time) on August 19, 1991, TASS and Radio Moscow announced that the USSR President was "prevented by ill health" from executing his duties and that in accordance with article 127 (7) of the USSR Constitution, USSR Vice President Gennagii Yanaev was assuming power as acting president head of an eight-man "State Committee for the State of Emergency in the USSR".<sup>176</sup> The coup, although cosponsored by Defense Minister Yazov did not specifically represent the interests of the military but the

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<sup>173</sup> Foye, S., "Gorbachev's Return to Reform: What Does it Mean for the Armed Forces", *Report on the USSR*, Vol. 3, No. 28, July 12, 1991, p. 6.

<sup>174</sup> According to Ellen Jones the military council had the right to examine and decide all important questions of the life and activities of the army and the fleet, and are responsible before the Central Committee, government, and the Ministry of Defense for the condition and combat readiness of the troops. Jones, E., *Red Army and Society-A Sociology of the Soviet Military*, Boston, 1985, pp. 19-20.

<sup>175</sup> Foye, S., "Gorbachev's Return to Reform", p. 7.

<sup>176</sup> TASS, August 19, 1991, cited in Teague, E., "Coup d'état Represented Naked Interests", *Report on the USSR*, Vol 3, No. 35, 1991, p. 1.

naked interests of the military industrial complex - a network of interests represented by the armed forces and the defense ministry and traditionally defended by the state police.<sup>177</sup> The effort did not receive a wide following in the lower echelons of the military command. As Stephen Foye states the coup could properly be "Characterized as a military coup lacking the support of the army, launched, implicitly at least, in defense of the Communist Party apparatus that, in the end refused to support its actions".<sup>178</sup>

The immediate causes for the coup have been widely speculated on. One of the major causes was the friction between conservatives and Gorbachev over the path of reform. Gorbachev had alienated the Communist Party and the military in his attempts to overhaul the economy. The "Nine Plus One" agreement of April 1991 and the impending Union Treaty, which was to be signed August 20th, would have significantly reduced the power of the center. The Committee of Eight, seriously miscalculated the progress that Gorbachev's democratic reforms had brought to society. Defense Minister Yazov and other participants of the High Command failed to realize the lack of support among the lower ranking officer. This led to resistance and open disobedience to orders issued by the coup plotters and the subsequent failure of the coup.

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<sup>177</sup> Ibid.

<sup>178</sup> Foye, S., "A Lesson in Ineptitude: Military Backed Coup Crumbles", *Report on the USSR*, Vol. 3, No. 35, August 30, 1991, p. 5.

Gorbachev also had failed to heed several warning signs from the military in the months that preceded the coup. On July 23, 1991, an article entitled "A Word to the People" on the front page of the newspaper *Sovetskaya Rossiya*, a hard-line newspaper of Soviet politics, severely criticized Gorbachev leadership abilities. It appealed primarily to Russians and secondarily to the Soviet people to rise up in defiance of the current government of the state and to "resist those who do not love the country".<sup>179</sup> The article, which was signed by two military officers: Army General Vaennikov, chief of the ground forces, and Colonel General Gromov, included an appeal to the armed forces to prepare to be the means by which the homeland would be preserve intact. "We are convinced that the men of the army and navy, faithful to their sacred duty, will not allow a fratricidal war or destruction of the fatherland, that they will step forth as the dependable guarantors of security as the bulwark of all heathy forces in society."<sup>180</sup> Other members of the military High Command also participated in clandestine means to shore up support for the future assault on the leadership. Gorbachev's blind faith in tenants of his own ideology made him believe that the conservative leadership would not dare encroach on his leadership post.

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<sup>179</sup> McMichael, S. R., "Moscow Prelude: Warning Signs Ignored", *Report on the USSR*, Vol. 3, Number 36, September 6, 1991, p. 8.

<sup>180</sup> Ibid, p. 9.

## IV CONCLUSION

The military's participation in the failed coup represented the isolated interests of the old Party line and the several members of the High Command. It had been widely recognized by Soviet analysts that there had never been an attempt at a military coup throughout Soviet history prior to August. It was thought that the means and extent of control exerted by the Communist Party made it impossible for such an attempt to occur. The Party and military were thought to be inseparable and had overlapping interests and objectives. The military and political reforms initiated under Gorbachev, sought to break this linkage in order to provide the impetus for economic recovery. He radically altered the process and institutions of Soviet government to streamline its dilapidated system of rule. It was during this process that he alienated the very pillar of legitimacy that kept the Soviet regime in power for over seven decades, the Soviet military.

Throughout the history of the Soviet Union and the Russian empire, the military maintained its distinct role within society. Since Imperial Russian times, the military has sought to protect its institutional interests. It was often consulted for its expertise in military strategy and doctrine. Bargaining for increases in budget allocations, military hardware, and manpower, constituted a large part of the civil-military relationship. The relationship between the political and



military leadership was one of mutual dependency. Soviet military power and intimidation gave the regime legitimacy while in return, the political leadership provided the necessary means and ideology to support the military.

From the beginning the Soviet military held a special place in the regime. Born out of revolution, the military had defended the fledgling Communist Party from collapse against external enemies. It was seen as the protector of the Union and a unifying force for the large, expansive multinational empire. The military was the key to success in the international class struggle that brought world recognition to the Soviet regime. It also was a coercive political force that could consolidate a leaders position in a government that had no definitive leadership succession mechanism.

Civil-military relations in the Soviet Union were very much a product of an individual's personal leadership style and background. Every one of the Soviet leaders prior to Gorbachev had some affiliation with the military, be it through war or revolution. Gorbachev was illustrative of a new dynamic and charismatic leadership style that down played the great reliance on military power. He fundamentally changed the scope of civil-military relations. His methods of controlling the military were by means of dividing and conquering its leadership. He moved quickly to eliminate conservative forces of the old regime.

The autonomous position occupied by the military under Brezhnev came under close scrutiny. Military privilege in the economy and their unquestioned authority in military affairs had lead to economic stagnation, a militant society,



and corruption and mismanagement in the armed forces. Gorbachev's "new thinking" and perestroika provided the impetus for all of the radical reforms bestowed on society. The military's role in international affairs was devalued, nuclear weapons no longer provided political leverage, and the "human factor" in politics took on greater importance. The Soviet Union's reliance on military power had brought it isolation in the international community, involved in foreign wars, and produced a world that could destroy itself several thousand times. Gorbachev's ideology brought enhanced civilian access to military decision-making bodies. Glasnost provided the civilian leadership greater access to military secrets. Academics, intellectuals and the press forced the military leadership to legitimize their role in society. Heated debates over the extent and path of military reform ensued between the political and military leadership. No issue concerning the military was afforded sanctity. The military was perceived as the one of the primary means for which economic recovery. Military reform took on many dimensions. The major issues concerned the size of armed forces that would be sufficient to defend the Soviet Union, and the appropriate doctrine to visibly deter aggression but not appear offensive. Arms control and disarmament became the key instruments of Soviet foreign policy. It provided a forum for an intense civil-military struggle. Military resistance to unilateral concessions sustain numerous debates as the civilians pushed for further reductions. Civilian logic had it that as the stockpiles of weapons, both conventional and nuclear, went down, international tension would recede and

allow further cuts in Soviet forces. Technological resources would funnel into the crumbling Soviet economy as a result of reduced tension and give it renewed vigor. The INF, CFE, START, and unilateral reductions of Soviet forces had the military in retreat and the civilian leadership dominating the reform process.

Gorbachev's miscalculations in foreign policy lead to the collapse of Communist power in Eastern Europe and the unification of the two German states. His antagonistic attitude toward the military produced severe breaches in the civil-military relationship. The High Command was forced to accommodate a large scale demobilization of Soviet forces in Eastern Europe as well as the Far East, and Afghanistan on a short time scale which produced intense pressure and frustration for the military leadership. Military participation in politics increased as the break away republics sought to rid themselves of the central controls. Every dimension of politics and society began to involve the military leadership at some stage. Faced with an extreme housing shortage and poor living conditions, the military leadership began to fracture. Anti-militarism in the republics produced the perception of the Soviet military as an occupying force. A disgruntled officer corp saw the combat readiness of their units rapidly deteriorate as inter-ethnic disputes, desertions and open hostility raged within the military establishment. Support for the High Command became increasingly disillusioned by their unwillingness to provide organizational reforms that would rectify the rapidly deteriorating situation.

Gorbachev's vacillating political position generated widespread criticism from the military. As he began to disengage the Communist Party from all levels of Soviet government, Gorbachev crippled the last means for controlling the military. Conservative leaders began subverting his reforms and forestalling his efforts at further reform. Civil-military relations rapidly deteriorated as the disintegration of the Union became imminent. The military saw their autonomy in military affairs usurped, their professional interests sacrificed and their privileged position demoted. Fearing the loss of a large, unified, multinational army, the fractured High Command endorsed the coup d'état. Their miscalculation as to the support it would bring led to the coup's failure.

The consequences of the failed coup will provide the impetus for further radical reform of the existing military organization. In all possibility greater civilian access to defence decision-making will provide the necessary controls over the military leadership. However, the likelihood of continued resistance by former members of the defunct Communist Party and the military is a distinct possibility. Militarism has always been a force in the region and will continue to provide a medium for a possible "man on horseback" to lead the former union republics out of their economic morass. The debate over the future structure of the military will continue to provide both conflict and consensus. The consequences of the possible proliferation of weapons of mass destruction will press the future republican leadership's to enhance the civil-military dialogue and

provide a definitive forum to reduce the tensions between military and political leaders.



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